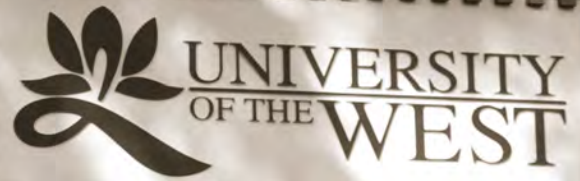




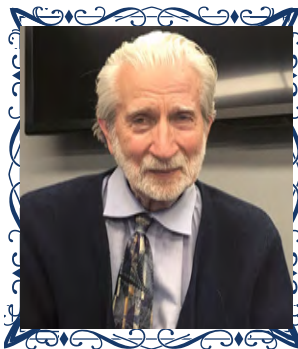
LOTUS LINK

Your Monthly Measure of
Character, Compassion, and Community



A Conversation With **DR. LEWIS LANCASTER**

Lotus Link is proud and honored to feature as its May cover story an exclusive interview with Professor Emeritus, former UWest President, and world-renowned Buddhist Studies scholar, **Dr. Lewis Lancaster**. Lotus Link contributor and Religious Studies PhD student, **Wenwen Zhou**, conducted the interview.



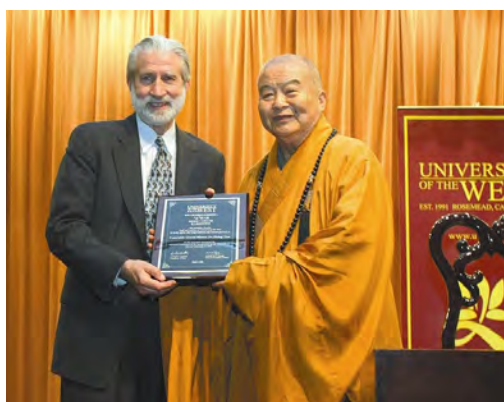
Contributor: Wenwen Zhou, April 19, 2019

Notes from the interviewer: The whole interview process was very interesting and relaxed. There was much laughter. I tried to keep almost every word to present the whole interview, instead of summarizing it like a report. I hope, in this way, you will feel like you are listening to Professor Lancaster talking to you, rather than reading an interview. I got to know how wise, humble, and kind Professor Lancaster is from his stories, suggestions and comments. These words also give me inspiration for my current studies and for those in the future. I hope you will enjoy the reading as much as I enjoyed the interview and transcribing.

For better navigation of the interview, most of the interviewer's responses were omitted. Some of Dr. Lancaster's responses have been slightly edited for clarity.

We know that you have a long history with UWest; could you please describe it briefly?

I first met Master Xingyun in 1988. Hsi Lai Temple had just been built, and the World Fellowship of Buddhists had their international meeting there. I came in contact with him [Master Xingyun] for the first time and they were already planning to have a university. I was asked in 1991 to help them with the start of the campus, and to teach, and to help them with getting approved by the state agency for schools.



You start out getting approved by the state, later you'd have to pick up a WASC accreditation. I helped write the first curriculum. We met at Hsi Lai Temple. I started teaching on weekends, like I still do. I was still at UC Berkeley. I came down and we met in the kindergarten room. We sat in the blue chairs with brown tape. It was the only place they had at that time. Those of us who were there at the very beginning still smile about the kindergarten room.

The university was first opened at the temple. Then they realized that they needed a campus. This property [on Walnut Grove Ave. in Rosemead] . . . had been a private school to train Christian medical missionaries. It was owned by a family. Probably there was some kind of trouble in the family and they split. As a result, it fell into decay and went bankrupt. So [when] this property came on the market, immediately they [Fo Guang Shan] tried to purchase it, but the people who owned it didn't want to sell to Buddhists. Well, to go bankrupt is bad enough - to go bankrupt and have to sell to Buddhists, because [the owners] were [evangelical] missionaries, it was just too much. So a group of Chinese businessmen bought the property and then they sold it to Fo Guang Shan. By today's standards, you'll just have to blink because it costs \$10 million. In those days, 10 million was a lot more than it is today. But nevertheless, a big facility like this is hard to find somebody to buy it because it was under education code. Real estate people couldn't buy it and build apartment houses without changing the code, and that's difficult to do.

continued on page 12

SPRINGBOARD TO SUCCESS

CELEBRATING EVENTS & ACHIEVEMENTS IN SCHOLARSHIP & PROFESSIONAL ACCOMPLISHMENT ACROSS UWEST

VITA VITA VITA!

Contributors: Trinity Bustria & Dr. Chi Sheh

For the two months between February 9 and April 15, UWest's Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) program and its committed volunteers assisted 514 taxpayers and their families by helping them receive an aggregate total of \$376,902 in tax refunds. Most of these taxpayers and their families received refunds equal to approximately half of their respective total annual incomes.

Following his experience with VITA this year, local actor Jerry Craig shared the following in an email dated April 20, 2019:

I have been most grateful to be a recipient of the services you provide . . . it is a great mental reassurance to feel one is complying with the law and attending to your civic duty in a safe environment. As an actor/director in the theatre, we are taught to be observers of all that is around us, and while waiting my turn to be helped, I see so many of my fellow citizens in the same helpless situation, confused and uneducated about the tax system, who want to comply with their obligations. The under-standing staff that attends to us are great listeners, always pleasant, courteous and thoughtful which gives us with a sense of trust and leaves us with a feeling of accomplishment by the time our session is over.

In the past, friends have helped me with my taxes but often made errors. Other times the cost was prohibitive because the tax service wanted to charge per W-2 voucher and artists can receive several through the year. The University of the West's public service is so very essential and brings together the many diverse communities which border the school. I have recommended your program to many for its accuracy, attention to detail, and the professionalism in the way the program is run . . . I only hope that this note helps me communicate my deep gratitude to the University of the West and its highly qualified staff.



Mr. Craig & Dr. Chi Sheh

Dr. Chi Sheh, VITA program director, writes, "There are many other taxpayers like Jerry who are really grateful for the service they have obtained at UWest, and continue to trust us to help them with their taxes every year. We have become a dependable service that they can depend on, as well as a valuable way in which our spirit of compassion and service is felt throughout our community." This includes the campus community - first-time VITA visitor and under-graduate student Guillermo Tranguilino shared that he felt comfortable coming to a place he was already familiar with for his first time to file his taxes. Echoing Craig's sentiments regarding the necessity to file one's taxes, Tranguilino said, "It is kind of like a weight that is off my back knowing the importance of filing taxes." Tranguilino noted the convenience of the VITA program on campus as a current student and added, "I do appreciate the help I have received." Dr. Lin, an adjunct business professor who has been coming to the VITA program at UWest for two years, noted—like Tranguilino—that he appreciated the program's convenience as somebody already part of the UWest community, and added that he found the VITA program to be "quite clear" and a "great service for a senior citizen."

If you are interested in serving as a volunteer in this valuable service to our community in 2020, please visit the VITA Program website at: www.uwest.edu/vita/ and fill out the application form. They are especially seeking bilingual Spanish-English, bilingual Cantonese-English, or trilingual Cantonese-Mandarin-English speakers.

REAL ESTATE, REALLY GREAT

Contributor: Dr. Bill Chen

On April 30, 2019, the Business Administration Department hosted a special seminar-guest lecture for MBA 543 Real Estate Finance and Investments. Guest lecturer Mr. Charlie Xiao is the Founder and Chairman of Mega International Enterprises, and Senior Investment Advisor of TNG Real Estate Consultants. Mr. Xiao's extensive experience in the US real estate industry has helped many residential and commercial investors - and no doubt provided lots of valuable insights to UWest MBA students!

ACCEPTED!

Contributor: Dr. Bill Chen



Undergraduate Business Administration major and 2+2 student Yilun (Blake) Lu was recently accepted into the Master's in Human Resources Management program at George Washington University in Washington, D.C. Blake's department chair notes that he has been an excellent student and UWest Dean's List honoree, while remaining very active on campus. Blake has been a student worker in the Business Administration Department office and the ESL program office; he served on the Student Government Election Committee this semester, and frequently attends Tea at Three.

Blake expressed his appreciation for the opportunities, scholarships, and support he received from UWest during his time here and during the grad school application process:

"As I progressed with my studies from Nanhua University to University of the West, I never thought I would go to graduate school one day. I spent most of my time making friends and attending meaningful events. I try to live my life to the fullest and enjoy what America has to offer. Professors and staff here are just terrific, as they tried their best to help me find out what my interests are. . . . I received much help on my admission essay from our school's Student Success Center. Dr. Bill Chen and Professor Michael Arnold wrote me excellent recommendation letters. Without their help, I could never get accepted to George Washington University. I appreciate my two years of college life at UWest and look forward to starting my new life in Washington, D.C."

TENURE & PROMOTION

The UWest Board of Trustees recently voted to award Business Administration faculty member Dr. Chi Sheh tenure and promotion to Associate Professor. Congratulations, Dr. Chi Sheh!

CONFERENCE & CONNECTION

This year, the 16th United Nations Day of Vesak Celebrations 2019 (celebrating the birth, enlightenment, and death of Gautama Buddha) will be held in Bangkok, Thailand on May 15-16. The International Council for Day of Vesak has extended a formal invitation for one UWest delegate to attend the celebration; Chaplain August Peterson will be UWest's representative at this event, which will host more than 1650 delegates from 112 countries and territories.



Vesak Day, Bangkok, 2017 CC BY 1.0, ludexvivorum

Venerable De Hong, a co-founder of the Engaged Buddhist Alliance and this semester's Living Buddhism instructor, has received two invitations to speak about his experience in facilitating meditation and mindful awareness practices and instruction in teachings of the Buddha to incarcerated men and women in California prisons. Ven. De Hong will first speak at *Moral Injury and Pathways to Recovery*, co-sponsored by Volunteers of America and the Los Angeles Department of Mental Health. This conference seeks to increase knowledge about moral injury and recovery strategies, as well as to provide continuing education for professionals and students working in mental health, spiritual health, and community and congregational leadership takes place over May 29-31 at USC's University Park Campus. Those interested in attending may register online at: <https://www.regonline.com/builder/site/?eventid=2550240>

Ven. De Hong has also been invited to speak at the What's After Mindfulness Urban Retreat? in Berkeley, hosted by the UC Berkeley Fung Institute of Engineering Leadership and presented by the 11th Global Conference on Buddhism. This event takes place over June 29-30 in Berkeley, and will offer various tracks throughout the weekend filled with guided meditation, movement/yoga classes, panel discussions, small circle of sharing, dharma talks, live music, demonstrations, 2 movie screenings, and a closing concert by Imee Ooi. (Dr. Lewis Lancaster will also speak at this event.) To register online, visit <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/after-mindfulness-urban-retreat-registration-47961501141>

NEW REL GRADUATE COUNCIL IN SESSION

Contributors: Dr. Miroj Shakya & Vaishali Gaidhani

The REL Graduate Council was launched on April 17, 2019 in the presence of two distinguished faculty advisors and 14 council members. The introductory meeting of the council welcomed and elected the following officers:

Faculty Advisor 1: Dr Miroj Shakya

Faculty Advisor 2: Dr Shou-Jen Kuo

President: Ms Vaishali Gaidhani

Vice-President: Venerable Hieu Nguyen

Secretary: Ms Natalia Kao

Treasurer – Ms Karen Deng

REL Graduate
Council President
Vaishali Gaidhani

This dedicated council for Religious Studies students aims to develop the skills and strengthen students' capabilities in pursuit of their academic and scholarly interests. Potential activities include field-trips, meditation retreats, travel abroad and study tours, participating in national/international conferences, offering workshops for student awareness and development, providing academic peer support, conducting and participating in intra-council conferences, arranging guest lecture series by inviting globally distinguished monastics and scholars in the field, and fundraising.

The REL Graduate Council's first guest lecture on April 23, 2019 was "An Appreciative Analysis and Performance of Music Works of Master Hongyi," given by Mr Shine Yong, a producer of The Knight of Shadows: Between Yin and Yang, Jackie Chan's latest hit film. Mr. Yong joined iQIYI Pictures in 2015 as the director and producer of Pureland Studios, iQIYI. Mr. Yong presented a highly engaging audio-visual biographical experience of the multi-talented Master Hongyi who eventually turned an ascetic revitalizing the Vinaya School of Buddhism. The REL Graduate Council thanks Ms. Karen Deng (Treasurer) for the reference and support in organizing this guest presentation.



CATALOGUE OF DIGITIZED RARE SANSKRIT BUDDHIST MANUSCRIPTS, VOL. 2

Contributor: Dr. Miroj Shakya

University of the West recently released the Catalogue of Digitized Rare Buddhist Manuscripts, Vol.2, the second volume produced by Rare Buddhist Manuscript Preservation Project, a collaboration of digital documentation between the University of the West and Nagarjuna Institute in Nepal. This volume, edited by Prof. Dr. Miroj Shakya and catalogued by Dr. Iain Sinclair, provides detailed descriptions of one hundred manuscripts in Sanskrit and in the Newar language which are kept in private collections in the Kathmandu Valley of Nepal. These manuscripts provide vital data for the study of the forms Buddhism has taken and the traditional regional practices (up until today, primarily represented by Newar Buddhism) as well as for the history, art, language, scribal cultures, inter-religious, intra-religious relations and knowledge systems of the Himalayas along with the Indian region more generally.



EXPRESSIONS OF DHARMA: THE FIRST INSTITUTE FOR THE STUDY OF HUMANISTIC BUDDHISM CONFERENCE

From April 4-6, 2019, scholars from all over the world met at Hsi Lai Temple and UWest for the first conference to be presented by the Institute for the Study of Humanistic Buddhism, *Expressions of Dharma: Buddhist Art and Culture in Everyday Life*.

From the ISHB's website: "Artistic and cultural expressions have been a vital means of religious engagement for Buddhists. From early Buddhist architecture to cave paintings and calligraphy, artistic forms symbolically capture Buddhist worldviews in ways that both reflect and enhance religious devotion." The conference also marked the publication of the English edition of the *Encyclopedia of Buddhist Arts*; one of the conference's featured panels was comprised of *Encyclopedia* editors and editorial advisors, and was moderated by Venerable Youheng, the *Encyclopedia's* Editorial Director.

Lotus Link campus event reporter and Religious Studies PhD student **Wenwen Zhou** caught up

continued on page 4

EXPRESSIONS OF DHARMA: CONTINUED

some of the conference presenters and attendees to find out more about their professional backgrounds and their conference experience.

Dr. Sarah Richardson, Lecturer at the University of Toronto and Acting Director of the Robert H. N. Ho Family Foundation Center for Buddhist Studies, presented "The Place of 'the Everyday' in Buddhist Narrative Painting."

What are your impressions of the conference?

It's been a great conference. It's been a rare treat to have this many people in one place, who are all experts. We started in different ways, so it's been lovely. Every conversation has been a learning experience for me. And also, we are all impressed by the Encyclopedia of Buddhist Arts.

As a scholar, what are your suggestions/advice for students at UWest?

I just would encourage students to study what they love, whatever that is. If you are trying to learn more about what it is that really interests you, then you are on the right path.

Margarita Delgado Creamer, Visiting Assistant Professor in the Religious Studies department at the University of Pittsburgh, presented her paper, "Earliest Buddha Images in China: Reception and Transformation."

What are your impressions of the conference?

The kindness and generosity. How warmly I was received since I arrived at the airport. Everything was just perfect. Everybody was taking care of me. I think that's very unusual. Some-times, the academic world can be very tough and competitive. This is extraordinary, the quality of the conference is just amazing. I learned something new from every paper. All the papers have been well researched. It's a real privilege to be part of the conference.

As a scholar, what are your suggestions/advice for students at UWest?

This is a wonderful moment of your life. Really take advantage of it. Savor it. Don't compete with others. Don't feel pressure to be an outstanding student. Try to find your way around the maze. This is the moment for you to try to focus on life. Don't just think of the objective of graduating, but what it is that you want to give back to life. The question is often what I can get out of this situation. I think it changes our life strategically when we start to think what we can give back.



Dr. Sarah Richardson, University of Toronto



Conference participants, UWest Founder's Courtyard

Xinhui Yang, PhD student at USC, is studying Sino-Tibetan Buddhist art in the late Qing-Ming period; her advisor, Dr. Sonya Lee, moderated the conference's plenary panel on Buddhist material culture and the everyday life.

What are your impressions of the conference?

I think it's amazing that our advisor Sonya Lee put the morning panel together. Four scholars studying different countries. I think it's an interesting dynamic. Also the topic of this morning is everyday life. It's fascinating these scholars brought in their personal experiences. I think what we do in our scholarship is tightly related to our background and is also part of our life. There is a great variety in their topics. For example, we saw manuscripts, contemporary garden, and Japanese garden.

Did you get any inspiration from the conference that may help your future studies?

My Master's thesis was about Tibetan Canon. I'm interested in the materiality in it. I appreciate the view to look at objects as they are still in use in living tradition, not just art or in museums. Just the observance of how to use it daily and whatever serves the community can be called Buddhist art. I think that's an important idea.



Conference proceedings, Hsi Lai Temple

Graham Wilson, *Encyclopedia of Buddhist Arts* Painting Editor, and **Stefanie Pokorski**, *Encyclopedia of Buddhist Arts* Calligraphy Editor, both participated in the featured panel on the *Encyclopedia*.

What attracted you to working on the Encyclopedia of Buddhist Arts?

Wilson: The opportunity to learn about Buddhist art.

Pokorski: I have a background in art and science. The opportunity to learn about Buddhism and art history at the same time was really interesting to me.

Could you share a bit about your experience working on this project?

Wilson: We are living at Fo Guang Shan Temple, Taiwan, which is really amazing. It's an amazing opportunity to be surrounded by Buddhist art every day and working on the project. It is really an inspiration. We are just so lucky to be able to help in our own small way, to help the encyclopedia to be finished. I hope you have a copy at the university. So many people contributed, hundreds of hundreds of people, professors, and venerables. And there is the Chinese edition and English edition. It's a really big project.

Pokorski: It's a unique opportunity for me to immerse in Buddhist culture in Taiwan and Chinese language. Although we published the English version, we needed to work with the translation. It created so much interest for me. Since then, I studied Mandarin. It opened up new opportunities for me. Like new interest, and different things to explore. And learn more about Buddhism.

Do you have any suggestions for students?

Pokorski: Just take part in as many as opportunities as you can. Engage with different cultures and communities whenever you have that opportunity. Experience new things, learn things about yourself and find out where you want to go in your life.

Lotus Link congratulates ISHB Director Dr. Jane Iwamura & Asst. Director Dr. Shou-Jen Kuo on a very successful first conference!

COMMENCEMENT CEREMONY SPRING 2019

On Saturday, May 18, 2019, the University of the West Undergraduate and Graduate Classes of 2019 will be honored for their achievements with a commencement ceremony.

CEREMONY LIVE STREAM

A live stream of the ceremony will be available (during the time of the ceremony only) at <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCBFGbDa-caSPzFxCXZa4v-A/live>

A recording will be available approximately two weeks following the ceremony. Details will be emailed when the edited recording is available.

REGALIA PICK-UP

If you are a graduating student and have not yet picked up your regalia (cap and gown) from the Registrar's office in AD 104, please do so ASAP - or email them at registrar@uwest.edu to make other arrangements.

CAP DAYS

Decorate your graduation cap to reflect your own sweet style - the Student Life Office will be providing a self-service Cap Decorating Station next week, May 13-17, in the Rec Center. Join us for snacks and drinks at 4pm on Monday, May 13.

CEREMONY REHEARSAL & PHOTOS - FRI, MAY 17

Friday's rehearsal is for students only. Check-in at the auditorium by 4pm - please don't be late! Photos from 4pm-5pm, rehearsal from 5pm-7pm.



COMMENCEMENT - SATURDAY MAY 18

What	Time	Where
Check-in	8:45am	ED 2nd Floor Lobby
Group photo	9:30-9:45am	ED Front Stairs
Line up	9:45am	Behind AD building
Ceremony	10am SHARP!	Auditorium
Reception	11:15am-12pm	Courtyard

The registrar's office recommends that you wear something lightweight under your gown and that you do not bring purses or other things you would need to carry, unless you can safely leave it in your car during the ceremony. There is no secure storage location here on campus.

The auditorium opens for guest seating at 9 am. The ceremony should end around 11:30 and is immediately followed by an informal reception in the fountain courtyard with light refreshments. Take this opportunity to introduce your family to your favorite professors and staff!

Diplomas will be ready for pick-up or mailing sometime in July.

Congratulations to all our graduating students and our exchange students heading back to their home countries - you made it!

Meditation retreat/walk with Venerable Sumanakitti, Loyola Marymount University, April 8, 2019



Rainbow Lotus Club at Miss Coco Peru's "Have You Heard?" Renberg Theater @ LA LGBT Center, April 26, 2019



IRUN4, 5K, WE MADE IT!

Contributor: Wen Chao Chiu

For Common Ground, the Marathon With Mindfulness Club and The Three Acts of Goodness Club, in coordination with the Office of Student Life, co-hosted a 5K run at Bosque del Rio Hondo on April 13.

The run was named "iRun4" or "I Run For" because the clubs wanted to motivate the participants to run for someone or something, utilizing the principle of "right mindfulness" as good that can be transferred to the people and things one cares about. The clubs hosted an information session on March 14 in the Student Life Office to introduce important



and useful concepts on active meditation, walking meditation, and running meditation.

On April 13, the runners got their bib numbers and "iRun4" t-shirt before beginning the run. Everyone had a fun time and felt great; it was a joyful and meaningful activity, culminating in celebrating the three winners - Bronze medalist Jingjia Lin, Silver medalist Bryan Shao, and Gold medalist Salim Karam. The clubs would like to thank President Otto Chang, Chief Enrollment and Student Affairs Officer Vanessa Karam, and the Marathon With Mindfulness club advisor, Dr. Meskerem Tadesse, for their participation.



HIGHLIGHTS FROM COMMON GROUND 2019

OH MY ONIGIRI!

Contributor: Trinity Bustria

Students in this semester's Sociology and Japanese classes participated in April's Common Ground Week by preparing and selling *onigiri* (triangular-shaped Japanese rice balls wrapped in seaweed) and *miso* (a Japanese soup made from fermented soybean) on Thursday, April 4 inside the Rec Center. The activity was a fundraiser for Venerable De Hong's meditation classes for incarcerated men and women in state and federal prisons throughout California. Upon learning of the Venerable's need for yoga mats and other supplies, Liberal Arts Department Chair Dr. Kanae Omura brought the discussion to her Sociology and Japanese students. The students and Dr. Omura decided to hold a fundraiser event to help De Hong. They elected to prepare and sell *onigiri* and *miso* because of their great taste and quick, easy preparation; because both dishes are iconic of Japanese cuisine; and both can be made vegetarian. "*Onigiri* is typical to Japanese *bento* [lunchbox]," explained Dr. Omura.

Knight Liu, a student of the Japanese language and connoisseur of Asian cuisine, added that "*onigiri* is easy to make."

On April 4, Dr. Omura and her students cut tofu, washed fruit, prepared spinach, and cooked rice from 9:00 am to 12:00 pm in the student kitchen. Their goal was to raise \$250, but they sold over \$300 worth of *onigiri* and *miso* with fruit and dessert. Later in the afternoon, an anonymous donor contributed \$100, bringing the grand total to a whopping \$425 – well past the initial goal of \$250!

Sociology student Ashlynn Suquett explained that the Sociology and Japanese classes committed to assisting Venerable De Hong in his work helping inmates meaningfully shape the direction of their lives and reducing their risk of recidivism. "Many inmates who participate [in Venerable De Hong's meditation classes] are more likely to not return to prison once released [and are likely to work] towards a better life outside of crime to overall change their life in a positive direction. Their motivation to better their lives beyond prison life was the driving force behind the idea of the fundraiser and the motivation within our classes to do our part."



WORTH A THOUSAND WORDS

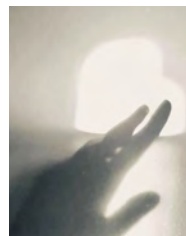
Contributor: Student Life Office

Every year, part of Common Ground Week is the Photography Competition event, allowing students a platform to showcase their photo-graphy talent. Photos submitted for competition were exhibited in Ken Locke Hall throughout Common Ground Week. The winners were selected by votes from students, faculty, and staff, and received Starbucks gift cards from the Student Life Office.

1st Place - Saroj Bhandari



2nd Place - Jieyan Zheng



3rd Place - Hoa Sen



Contributor: Vanessa Karam

[illegible]

An Apology Letter to My Body

- Vanessa Wang, Religious Studies PhD Student

Dear body,
I am sorry
For once hating your small Asian eyes
And your mildly yellow skin color
because everyone around you was white
I should have been proud of my own heritage

I know that mom taught you beauty
is defined by society
There is a certain way of
How we, as women, should behave
And conform is the only way

I am sorry
that I believed her
for so many years
I looked at you
And saw nothing but flaws

I am sorry that I didn't know how to nourish you
for starving you on purpose
gave you half an apple a day

I am sorry
that I put you through
eating disorder for so many years
for feeling guilty to eat
and for being scared not to eat

see,
My mom ate from a plate
that was as small as your palms were
the more she shrank the prouder she became
so I thought
that's what a woman should be like

I learned
to see a woman's body
through her eyes

I apologize
for letting the numbers on the scale to define your worth
and that I started to lie about your weight
before even having your period
I thought a size zero was the only definition
of beauty
The only way to exist
as a woman

I am sorry
That I tried to make you look attractive
Before understanding the reasons why
A short skirt and lip gloss
were the only ways to attract boys at age 9

I am Sorry
That you have been sexualized long before understanding
what being a female really means

You are a human being
Blood and flesh
You are not born to please

sorry
That I compared you
with the models on front page magazines
And blamed you
for not looking like them
You should know
There is not a standard for beauty
You can just be you

I am sorry
That I always wanted to change you
didn't appreciate you
didn't want to live inside of you.

I am sorry that I unlearned all this too late
that I never thanked you
for being here for me
all this time
even when I tried to hurt you
You always took your time
To forgive me
and you never stopped holding me up

You are my body
Not someone else's property defined
by the norms of society

you are my body
You are sacred
You are enough
And from now on
I am going to love you
Sincerely,
Vanessa



Paintings by
Kuei-Wen Lillian Li

BA Liberal Arts, Business concentration



Once [Fo Guang Shan] purchased it, they had to do some fixing up before they could move in. As you know, some buildings have names on them [from when it was a Christian missionary school]. Everybody said those were people who supported the former school and we should take them off. Master Xingyun said no; they paid to have those buildings built, their names should stay. I thought that was very classy - leave those names on there. [During renovations], one of the nuns stayed on the campus at night by herself just to kind of protect it.

How has UWest changed for the better over the years?

Well, every place that starts has all the growing pains that a school is going to have. Where do you find faculty? Where do you find students? How can you build a library? The problems are enormous. When you look at what the university is today compared to what it was when it started, it's rather amazing. I think we have an outstanding collection of Buddhist books in our library. It's one of the really good research libraries for Buddhist studies. We have this campus refurbished in many ways. Everything looks good. They preserve planting and landscaping. There are of course more students today. There were maybe 20 students when it first started.

How did they find students at the beginning?

It was a kind of word of mouth through Fo Guang Shan, Hsi Lai Temple, and local people. Then they began to recruit faculty, who sometimes knew people who came. Later, they began to reach out with radio ads, some Chinese radio, newspaper advertisements. But I think that it's always been kind of word of mouth.

What's unique about studying religion at UWest?

In some ways, UWest has attempted to NOT be unique, but to be part of the mainstream of the way in which people study Buddhism. We don't really attempt to uniqueness. But of course, every place is unique, so is this place. I think maybe it made its great contribution in terms of its training to monastics.

How do you incorporate whole person education in your classes?

I try to bring examples from real life. I'm sometimes very personal. I tell stories about my grandchildren. I try to let people see that Buddhist teaching actually can apply to daily life. But I don't do it skillfully. I just throw it in sometimes, as you know.

I think the stories were talked at the right place as examples. They also help link the theories you talk about with daily life.

I think you heard me say this, I don't think I teach; I think people learn. It's not my teaching. They learn. That's their process, not mine. Whatever it is that I do, it may have an influence, but you can't open up the skull and pour in something. And you never know how people are going to take what you say or what they're going to take away from your class. Sometimes I'd never see students ever again in my whole life. Once class is over, they just disappear. Sometimes it's kind of hard. You get acquainted with people, and you like them, and you have to let them go. Sometimes you run into them at an airport or somebody comes up and says, "I took your course 25 years ago". There is this middle aged person that I don't recognize, but I don't think any teacher really truly knows how what they've done is taken and used. You just have to give up on that.



In the early 1990s, I found myself beginning to be bored with my introductory course at Berkeley. I've been teaching it since 1967, and I realized if I was bored, probably the students were 10 times as bored. So I forced myself to take all my class notes and destroy them so that I couldn't rely on the old notes. And thereafter I have only talked about what would please me. And it's not always well rounded, but I felt that there are a lot of books on Buddhism, and there's no reason for me to repeat what's in those books. People can just read them and get more out of it than hearing me say it. So, I love to teach and I'm probably holding onto it too long because this is my 87th year. I probably should just leave it, but I still love to do it. I keep begging people who are my friends to tell me when it's time, when I would become gaga. Don't let me make a fool of myself. Well, I do still love to teach.

We like your classes as well.

But if you ever see that I've passed it, please tell me.

Is there a favorite class for you to teach and why?

No, I wouldn't say so. I try not to repeat. So ever since 1991, I don't think any class that I've ever taught is a duplicate of something that I already taught. I redo my PowerPoints for every class. That keeps it fresh and forces me to rethink. And so you can't get bored with that.

I heard that you were the first PhD student in Buddhist Studies in America. Is that true?

That's a little overstated. The first PhD program in the US that was specifically in Buddhist Studies, not religious studies or theology or something else, was at the University of Wisconsin. People did Buddhist Studies before me. Of course they were in the linguistics sometimes. They were even in classics. They were Chinese language. In the early sixties, Richard Robinson came from Canada to the University of Wisconsin [because] they would let him open a full PhD program in Buddhist studies. He himself had been trained at SOAS (School of Oriental & African Studies) University of London. His field was Chinese studies, but he knew Sanskrit. I was the first person to finish that program. That's where the "first" comes from - not the first Buddhist scholar, but the first one to finish the PhD training in that program.

Which Buddhist tradition were you first introduced to?

My first Buddhist teacher was Nyogen Senzaki. He was a zen master. His teachings were contained in a book called *Zen Flesh, Zen Bones*. I knew him when he was in his 80s. He was a very remarkable person, had a little house in downtown Los Angeles, on Third Street. He had meditation sessions on Wednesdays, Friday nights and Saturday mornings. If you went there, he never charged. He didn't have an organization. But one of the people who worked with him whispered in your ear: "you should give him some money. But put it in an envelope, and just put it under the pad on his desk. Never hand it to him directly." Hopefully he'd get some money. But he never mentioned money, never mentioned joining. It was not institutionalized. Then he became ill and passed away. That was my first introduction to Buddhist practice.

How did you first become interested in Buddhism?

I came to USC to do a degree in comparative religion, and in 1954, I took a course that introduced me to Buddhism.

Who taught that course?

Floyd Ross. He was a comparatist. He wrote a book called *The Meaning of Life in Hinduism and Buddhism*. He had just come back from a Fulbright program in India and came to USC to work. At that time, I was doing comparative religion. I wasn't really seriously doing research because I didn't have the languages. After I finished [the comparative religion degree], I took two years off. I stepped out using two years to

A Conversation With DR. LEWIS LANCASTER

make a decision [about entering into research]. I thought to myself that was the last time probably I would be able to make such a major decision. I was already married and had one child, so I had family obligations, no money, and little things like that. It was my wife who decided that we could live anywhere we wanted for those two years, so we went to Hawaii. Hawaii had just been made a state. So it was in the news. It was a big time for Hawaii and it was in our consciousness. Then I worked in Hawaii for years. Before I went to work, I went to eight o'clock classes at the University of Hawaii and we would just study Japanese and finally I made the decision that I wanted to go for it.

Then the question was where. So, like Robinson, my first real teacher in Buddhist Studies, I thought to go to SOAS. I had applied, but then I got a word that Robinson had started a PhD program in Wisconsin. It sounded good, exactly what I wanted. SOAS didn't really have a degree in Buddhist Studies - you had to do work on Asian Studies in some way. Buddhist Studies could be your research, but it wasn't specifically Buddhist Studies.

I applied to University of Wisconsin very late because I didn't hear about it earlier, and they accepted me. So my wife and I got a little Fiat and drove across the country to Wisconsin. We had our first child, who was, at the time, three years old. We were expecting the second child. We had to borrow some money to [move to Wisconsin] because I didn't have money. One day, Robinson said to me, "Why don't you have a fellowship?" And I said, "Well, why don't I? Don't ask me!" Because I had applied late, I had missed the fellowship application.

Then, a few days later, I got a letter in the mail from the Brown Foundation telling me that I had a fellowship, and that they were giving me a retroactive check for the time I hadn't missed. So there was a check for \$800, which in those days was a lot of money. A month later, my son was born in Madison, Wisconsin, and the hospital bill was \$800 and we had it. Later, I found out that the Brown Foundation was part of the CIA, and because of the Vietnam War, they wanted somebody to study Buddhism so that they would know how to handle Buddhist traditions in Vietnam. I didn't realize that for years, until one day, I just opened up Time magazine and read that the CIA had secret

foundations and one of them was the Brown Foundation - it was just a made up name. So I tease my son and say "Don't get too radical, because, after all, the CIA paid for you!" After that, all my fellowships usually came through language fellowships and the federal Department of Education.

What was it like when you were starting out as a young scholar?

Well, I wasn't really so very young because I didn't come to Buddhist Studies until graduate school, my first class was a graduate class. When I started the study of the languages, it was very difficult for me because of my age, because you've lost your language capabilities in many ways. I had to work very hard. So I spent most of my early graduate years in taking Sanskrit, Pali, Chinese, Tibetan, and Japanese. I had the French and German already, but I had to get the languages so I could do research.

I was very fortunate to meet Edward Conze. He really became my mentor. He's the one who really taught me how to do scholarship. I think many people can get a PhD without learning how to do scholarship. They learn how to report on scholarship that's been done. They don't learn how to do something which has not yet been done because they don't have the language or they don't have the understanding of how you have to start with something, with a manuscript - you've got to build from that.

Edward Conze was a Prajanaparamita specialist. He couldn't read Chinese, so he asked me to translate the Chinese text that he was working on. I went to England for two summers and lived with him in his house. He gave me all that time, but he tore me apart every time. He once asked me how old I was. When I told him, he said, "I knew much more than you know when I was your age." I'm sure he did. He grew up in a very sophisticated family in Germany. But I never took offense at his (words). Other people just would go to pieces because he criticized them. I just thought it was kind of funny. So as a result we became friends. He was a very eccentric person. I didn't agree with many of his attitudes in life. He had the attitudes of the 19th century Germans, which I didn't agree with very often and he was self-taught in Buddhism and really had never done real practice. He never went to India. After I finished my degree, I offered to take him to India. He said no. He said "My India no longer exists. I want to hold on to my India,

which is in my text." But he did ask that I go to Gijjhakuta Peak (The Vulture Peak) and bring him back something from Gijjhakuta Peak where he believed the Prajanaparamita had been taught. So I went and broke the law and picked up a little piece of brick at the old monastery there. I gave it to him and he was very happy to have a piece from Gijjhakuta Peak.



***Gijjhakuta Peak (Vulture Peak),
outside Rajgir in northeast India.***

What's special about going to India for a person who studies Buddhist Studies?

I think that armchair scholarship can be very good and particularly in the 19th century, people thought that all they needed was a text and they could get out of that. I was like many other people in that when I first went to Asia, at first I thought, *I don't see any of the Buddhism that I have learned. Where is it?* And it took me a while to get over that and to realize that you can't think that way. You have to take the text in their time and their place. And you have to take the present in its time and its place. But it really helps to go and to realize that there is the Gijjhakuta Peak. And sometimes it's very mundane. You have to infuse it with the whole of the magnificence that you think of when you read the text. It's not there in the physical. Those are the lessons you have to learn.

What are your thoughts on the future of Buddhism?

I don't know. There is no way to predict anything. If you look at the predictions which people make about the economy, or about history, or politics or whatever it is, almost nobody is right. It never turns out that way. There are too many variables. So I don't worry too much. I just tried to look at Buddhism in the present moment. I think that Buddhism in the present moment is in something of the crisis because of the enormous changes in digital data management. We've never had so much power. And so we're struggling. Many Buddhist

CONTINUED ON PG. 12

CONTINUED FROM PG. 11

A CONVERSATION WITH DR. LEWIS LANCASTER

scholars pretty much ignore the digital and simply doing the safe old fashioned way, which is all right. But it won't last.

Is this why you are doing the digitalization, including the ECAI (Electronic Cultural Atlas Initiative?)

I want to stay up-to-date in development. I don't think we know any other way to do it.

What was Buddhist Studies like 50 years ago, as compared to now?

In the old days, we had almost to do everything because there were so few of us. We knew everybody in the west. We knew everybody in Europe. Today that's no longer true. It's huge. The other thing is that (the study of) Humanities is being challenged like never before in terms of methodology. We simply don't know what to do with the methodology.

What's one book everyone should read?

No book. There is no one book, there is no 100 books. When I was studying Buddhism, we were given a list of books every Buddhist scholar should read, so I read them all. Today, it would be impossible to give anybody a list that would give you the complete Buddhist tradition. It's expanded so enormously. So there is no one source for what Buddhism is anymore. I recommend to everybody that you learn how to use all that Internet resources. I don't give out bibliographies. I feel everybody needs to learn to how to fish. They need to learn to how to go out there and find good materials on their own and be able to judge it as much as possible. I would never give anybody a book.

What advice do you have for graduate students?

Sometimes graduate students come to me and ask, "what aspect of Buddhism should I study in order to get a position. Where is the field?" I always tell them that I would never answer such a question, that I recommend to everybody that your best bet is to study what gives you the greatest pleasure. And if you're good at it, you write books. So I recommend to everybody that find out what you really like and then make a decision about what is your greatest asset and tried to make use of that in your study.



When did you graduate from UWest and what degree did you earn?

I graduated from UWest with a Bachelor's degree in Psychology last August.

Why did you choose to come to UWest?

Someone I knew who was a student at UWest recommended it to me and told me that UWest usually provides student scholarships if students have financial difficulty.

How did you choose your major?

I wasn't sure at first. I was hoping that gaining knowledge in psychology would increase my ability to cope with stress and to help others who are suffering. Also, ever since my childhood, I have been very curious about the human mind and personality development. After more than four years of psychology learning, I am fully satisfied with all the Psychology classes, students, lecturers, and the Psychology department.

ALUMNI | Ong Chez Kuang (Chen Zhi) Class of '18

Which of the classes you took at UWest was your favorite and why?

Every Psychology class I took was flawless. Other than that, I would like to highlight the Speech class taught by Jonathan Berk. Not only was his class fascinating [and full of] rich detail, he also gave me great confidence, which helped me to become comfortable when speaking in public.

How did your time at UWest help prepare you for life after UWest?

UWest provided me chances to work with professors on research, give presentations and build connections with the community. Right after my graduation, I went through a major life transition. It took me months to settle down. The professors and my friends from UWest supported me during this time, both mentally and financially - I am so appreciative. Also, the Japanese classes I took in my first two years helped me get an N2 certificate (*Japanese-Language Proficiency Test measuring the level of understanding of Japanese used in a broad variety of scenarios in actual everyday life*), which expanded my career opportunities.

What are you doing now?

I am currently helping my aunt as an interpreter and translator at Fion Poon Fashion Exclusive (*Fion Ponn is a women's handbag and shoes designer mentored by Jimmy Choo*). During the weekends, I tutor Japanese children in the Mandarin language.



What is something new you learned recently?

Every small thing that you learn today may pay you big in the future.

What three words best describe UWest?

Compassion, warmth, supportive

What advice do you have for current students?

Advice for the international students: make friends with native speakers, join clubs, keep in touch with professors.



THE ELECTRONIC CULTURAL ATLAS INITIATIVE - ECAI.ORG

The Electronic Cultural Atlas Initiative (ECAI), based at University of California, Berkeley, is a global consortium of people who share the vision of creating a distributed virtual library of cultural information with a time and place interface.

ECAI uses time and space to enhance understanding and preservation of human culture.

Some of ECAI's projects include:

- The Maritime Buddhism Project
- Editorial Practices and the Web
- The Blue Dots Project, Text Analysis, and Pattern Detection: 3-D and Virtual Reality Environments
- Context & Relationships: Ireland & Irish Studies
- ECAI Austronesia

STUDENT | Wen Chao Chiu



What program are you in and what are you studying at UWest?

I am a Religious Studies PhD student, focusing on Buddhist studies. My dissertation will focus on satipatthana (foundations of mindfulness) in early Buddhism and Chinese Tian Tai (which is a Chinese Buddhist school focusing on meditation).

Why is this topic of study interesting to you?

I want to know about the development of mindfulness from the very beginning of early Buddhist times and how Chinese Buddhism has influenced the development of mindfulness. This school's methods of meditation are very different from meditation methods in early Buddhism. These days, there are many schools that give mindfulness practitioners many choices of which approach to mindfulness to take – such as Zen, Pure Land, Theraveda and Tibetan Buddhism, etc.

Why did you decide to become a Buddhist nun?

When I was a teenager in Taiwan, I went one day to the temple, and a Buddhist monk told me “we need some young people to get involved and promote Buddhism.” This gave me a vision – if young people get involved with Buddhism, they will help promote Buddhism, and if I can devote myself to this, I can help a lot of human beings.

Where do you see yourself in ten years?

I see myself as a part-time professor teaching meditation or Chinese Tian Tai. The rest of the time, I will run a spiritual institute for those who are seeking spiritual development and seeking to discover their true soul. The headquarters will be in Los Angeles and I hope that the first branch will be in Manhattan, in New York.

Can you talk about an issue on campus that you care about?

As a monastic, I sometimes feel like the students who are venerables can't always fully engage in campus activities. For example, during Common Ground, there was a spirit potluck, where students were encouraged to wear UWest shirts to show school pride. Venerables wear robes - we can't wear UWest shirts. It would be nice if the school could think about these things more intentionally to make sure that everyone feels included. Some of us venerables would like to be able to show our school spirit too. Actually, I think the school should design a vest, like the ones they wear at Hsi Lai Temple, which venerables could wear to conferences and events to show school spirit and to promote our school.

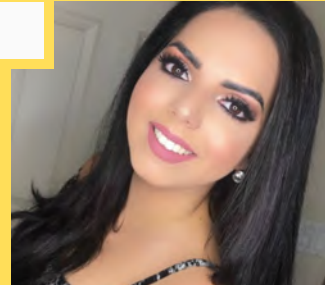
What would you like to see people do more of?

I would encourage people to run, because I feel that running has a lot of benefits. When you decide to start running, you create a very positive way of thinking, which supports the positive behavior of running. You start to run, you feel yourself become more healthy. To run, you have to discipline yourself and you will learn a lot about how to become a good runner. You will end up feeling proud of yourself. I believe your physical health can influence your mental health. Every day when you finish running, you will feel proud of yourself – this is good inspiration and encouragement you give to yourself and no one can take it away.

You founded the Marathon with Mindfulness Club on campus – why?

I founded the Marathon with Mindfulness Club because I don't want to run alone! I want to share the benefits I get from running. I picture a lot of people running together, huge good energy. Also, I can coach people who want to run – I can help them learn running health and safety, running skills, how to know your body and understand your physical strengths and weaknesses. I encourage people to run on their own schedule, but regularly. Anyone who is interested can run with me or receive running coaching from me and they can email me with any questions - wenchao.chiu@my.uwest.edu

STAFF | Sherean Masso



What do you do at UWest?

I'm the new Enrollment Advisor - I'll be networking, trying to build relationships with high schools so they can send us students, and basically getting students to come to UWest.

How long have you worked at UWest?

2 weekw! I started on Monday, April 29.

Tell us about your background!

I'm from La Habra in north Orange County. My experience in higher education includes working at the EOPS (Extended Opportunity Programs & Services), which is the program at all the community colleges that help students transfer to 4-year schools. I also worked at Argosy in Orange as Assistant Director of Admissions, and at American Career College in business development. I'm also a freelance makeup artist for weddings and events and also for the Mind Body Spirit talk show on Focus TV Network.

What do you like about working in higher ed?

I really love to help people figure out their goals, motivations, and passions in life.

What do you like about UWest so far?

I've only been here a week! But I do like the campus. It's so green and beautiful, it has a calming effect.

What is a movie you enjoyed recently?

Southpaw - it's very suspenseful. It stars Jake Gyllenhaal and the girl from *The Notebook* plays his wife.

Do you have any pets?

I used to have a really cute King Charles Cavalier named Sammy . . .

If someone was going to buy you Starbucks, what should they get you?

Cold brew with almond or soy milk - I'm trying to be healthy!

STUDENT REVIEW

Need something to do or somewhere to eat this weekend? ESL students have you covered! Check out their reviews of local restaurants and attractions.

THE MORE BEAUTIFUL THE NIGHT

Contributor: Jen

There are two fantastic places for looking at the night view nearby: **Griffith Observatory** and **OUE Skyspace**. If you like looking at the night view, do not miss these two places while you are here in LA.

Griffith Observatory is located on a high hill; it has a wide view of the night, and you can truly see all of Los Angeles from the hill. If you want to drive, parking nearby is free, but many people watch the sunset, so if you arrive here late, it might be hard for find parking. I recommend going early or taking Uber, it costs 30 dollars a car from UWest and is about a forty minutes ride. Sometimes there is strong wind, so I recommend bringing a jacket. You can also sit on the grass and enjoy the sunset and night scenes. One great thing - no tickets required! - free of charge. (Although if you want to experience the celestial performance venues, it costs \$7). Griffith Observatory is open from 12 a.m. to 10 p.m., Tuesday to Friday, from 10 a.m. to 10 p.m., Saturday and Sunday.

Another great place to see the night view is **OUE Skyspace**, located in the iconic U.S. Bank Tower in downtown Los Angeles. From the 70th floor, you can see the night view over all of DTLA. If you drive, parking requires a fee because it is located in an urban area. If you take Uber, it costs \$20 a car from UWest and the drive from UWest is about 20 minutes. The tower also has a first-of-its-kind outdoor glass slide that's attached to the exterior of the U.S. Bank Tower. Daily admission is \$25 and the Skyslide is an extra \$8. It is also very cool in the evenings, so I recommend bringing a jacket. It is open 7 days a week from 10am to 10pm.

Both of these spots are great places to look at the night view. It depends on the atmosphere you want to experience. If you want to visit both, the drive from Griffith Observatory to OUE Skyspace takes about 30 minutes. Uber costs \$18 from Griffith Observatory to OUE Skyspace. Either one is a fun and awesome adventure!



View from OUE Skyspace

Contributors: Sheena & Vivian

If you guys are looking for a fun sit down restaurant to enjoy with family, there are two places you must try. One place is the iconic American restaurant **Cheesecake Factory** and another is a Vietnamese restaurant, **Golden Deli**. You could even actually arrange to visit these two kinds of restaurants in one day. One of the restaurants is for lunch, the other one can be for dinner. There are several reasons you must visit them!

The Cheesecake Factory is a leading chain American restaurant, started in the 1940s. Cheesecake Factory provides lots of authentic American food, not only wonderful meals but also incredible desserts. They have salads, pastas, burgers, sandwiches, steak, cakes, and ice cream, etc. You could have almost every type of American food or dessert here. Another great part of this restaurant is the atmosphere, the noise is not too loud and the atmosphere can be romantic, especially at night. The seats are spacious and comfortable and there are both inside and outside tables, so this place is good for a big family or many friends to have a meal together. Lunch prices start at \$8.95. Dinner starts at \$12.95. Desserts, including cheesecake, start at \$6.95. Be warned - not every Cheesecake Factory has a parking lot, so check online before you drive to the restaurant.



Godiva chocolate cheesecake

The Golden Deli restaurant has served Vietnamese style food since 1981, and you can find almost any kind of Vietnamese food here: the traditional Vietnamese noodles soup, Pho; the most famous side food, Spring Rolls; the representative Vietnamese sandwich, banh mi; or the specific drink, Vietnamese coffee. All of these and more you can enjoy in this restaurant. The atmosphere at this restaurant is casual and relaxed, so we recommend it for your family or friends' gathering. In addition, the servers frequently supply water and make sure their customers enjoy their food, so the service here is really nice.

CAN'T MISS FOOD EXPERIENCES

Also, the price range is about \$10 to \$15 dollars, so if you want to save money you also can visit here. There is a big parking lot so that you not only can easily find the location but also can find parking.



Brisket, tendon & tripe rice noodle soup

Finally, if you want to visit both Cheesecake Factory and Golden Deli, please make sure you visit these two places before the rush hour, because neither of them take reservations. Getting there early can help you make sure you enjoy your food immediately. This way, you not only can get the better quality of atmosphere but also can enjoy the food in a less noisy environment.

LA is a gourmet paradise! There are tons of delicious foods that you guys can find in here. But you must add both Cheesecake Factory and Golden Deli to your must-eat list when you come here. If you skip these two restaurants in your journey, you will have regrets when you leave. What are you waiting for? Let's go eat!

Food enthusiasts:

Sheena Yeh & Vivian Hsu



Lotus Link is a publication of the
Office of Institutional Effectiveness
at University of the West
AD 139

Jessa Forsythe-Crane, Editor: jessaf@uwest.edu
PJ Gorczyca, Associate Editor
Wenwen Zhou, Printing Coordinator

All comments, questions, feedback, and submissions
may be sent directly to newsletter@uwest.edu

WHAT'S UP AT UWEST?



Mon., May 6	Degree students: \$50 late registration fee
Mon., May 13	ESL students: Summer/Fall 2019 registration
Mon. May 13	Cap Decorating Station kick-off reception, 4pm, Rec Center
Mon., May 13-Fri., May 17	Finals Week
Thurs., May 16	UWest Donor Appreciation Banquet
Sat., May 18	Commencement
Mon. May 27	Campus closed (Memorial Day)
Tues., May 28	Summer Session I begins



WHAT'S UP AROUND LOS ANGELES?

May 9-May 13	Happy Birthday Monterey Park with carnival rides, food trucks, music, Monterey Park (https://bit.ly/2VnpNaM)
Fri., May 10	2019 LA K-Move Job Fair, 12pm-6pm, JW Marriott at LA Live in downtown LA (https://bit.ly/2VjLfgU)
Sat., May 11	Dumplings, Noodles & Rice Night at Food Bowl Night Market, 7pm-10pm, Grand Park, downtown LA (https://bit.ly/2LvfkFT)
Tues., May 14	Pasadena Job Fair, 11am - 2pm, Hilton Pasadena (https://bit.ly/302nU25)
Wed., May 15	FREE PANEL! Will California Pick the Next President? 7:30pm-9:30pm, National Center for the Preservation of Democracy, LA (https://bit.ly/2VRj60e)
Thurs. May 16	FREE TICKETS! Big Bang Theory Series Finale Viewing Party, 8pm (doors at 6pm), Pasadena Convention Center (https://bit.ly/2V7mTSS)
Sat., May 18	FREE ACTIVITY! Rose Pedal 2019, 2pm-8pm, Rose Bowl Stadium, Pasadena (https://bit.ly/2VLHVuD)
Sat., May 18	FREE EVENT! Avocado Festival 2019, 10am-4pm, La Habra Heights (https://bit.ly/2PQWY09)
Sun., May 19	FREE WORKSHOP! Foster & TNR for Neighborhood Cats & Kittens, 2pm-5pm, Pasadena Humane Society (https://bit.ly/2VTDxtt)
Sat., May 25	FREE ACTIVITY! Visit the labyrinth & meditation gardens at Peace Awareness Labyrinth & Gardens, LA (https://bit.ly/2VknZ2A)
Sat., May 25	FREE EVENT! Pomona Children's Festival 2019, 10am-2pm, Pomona Civic Center Park (https://bit.ly/302LUXF)



YOUR MONTHLY SERVICE LEARNING OPPORTUNITY

HELP THE HOMELESS

Are you interested in bringing hope to the lives of people who live on the street? Volunteer with **The Shower of Hope** and help them uplift those who are often overlooked.

Volunteer duties include cleaning the shower stall, managing and distributing hygiene and toiletries, and ensuring that the guests have the best experience for the duration of the time they are there.

Please message the Shower of Hope Facebook page for more information. <https://www.facebook.com/theshowerofhope/>



HELP AT-RISK KIDS

Want to be a camp counselor? Come join **Camp Laurel** in Big Bear CA for a week this summer! The mission of The Laurel Foundation is to enrich and empower at-risk children, youth and families through diverse and educational camp experiences. The Laurel Foundation serves the HIV/AIDS, transgender and other at-risk youth populations and their families.

The Laurel Foundation is looking for volunteers who can commit to one week of residential summer camp. Learn more at <https://www.laurel-foundation.org/volunteer/>



FROM THE OFFICE OF ACADEMIC AFFAIRS

DR. PETER M. ROJCEWICZ
CHIEF ACADEMIC OFFICER &
ACCREDITATION LIAISON OFFICER



SHAPING OUR HUMANITY THROUGH STUDY OF THE HUMANITIES

On Monday, April 8, 2019, Common Ground kicked off with an opening ceremony that included multiple blessings from various traditions. The following comments were delivered by UWest's Chief Academic Officer, Dr. Peter M. Rojcewicz:

I am happy to speak at this morning's *Common Ground* ceremony about a few aspects of humanism and the study of the humanities. To some, it may seem contradictory to do so in the midst of the spiritual setting defined by the chanted prayers and mantras we have heard. Why might this be so?

Many people, when they hear the word "humanism," coined by German scholars in the 18th century, immediately associate it with the words "secular" or "atheistic." Columbia University trained philosopher Dr. Michael Grosso insists it is wrong to think of the humanities in such narrow terms. "Secular humanism" and "atheistic humanism" ignore the historical roots of the humanities in the early Italian Renaissance.

Renaissance thinkers, unlike pundits in our own times, eschewed a divide between "secular" and "spiritual." The best known humanist scholars of the age acknowledged an indivisible intimacy between the natural and the supernatural worlds, eager to link numerous elements referred to as pagan and Christian, ancient and modern. Italian humanists, as Grosso views it, sought a healing of splits to our being and development of skills to live in concord with one another and nature.

For example, Marsilio Ficino and Pico Mirandola promoted the unity of truth and equality of religion and philosophy, an integral vision later referred to by Leibniz as the "perennial philosophy." Similarly, today's new global humanities are multicultural and pluralistic, including Buddhism, Taoism, Islam, Hinduism, Eco-spirituality, Shamanism, and other aboriginal wisdom systems. I highlight here the Renaissance spirit of holism and its whole-person values visible in the humanities, undermined by the Reformation, when reason was devalued, and later by the scientific revolution that discredited spirituality.

The expression, *Studia Humanitatus*, or, the study of the humanities, emerged among early Italian humanists of the late 13th century as a theory of education founded on classical standards for fashioning a desirable human being. This transformation of our humanity was sought fundamentally through literary training of the imagination and a life of practical morality. The humanities project was nothing less than the study and practice of what it meant to become a complete human being, that is, to manifest *L'umo Universale*, the whole person, rational, imaginative, spiritual, and ethical.

A powerful manifesto of the humanities is Giovanni Pico della Mirandola's *Oration on the Dignity of Man* (1486). Pico asserted that the distinctive feature of a human being is the absence of a fixed and absolute nature. We are defined by openness to innumerable possible states of being. We possess the powers to transform and enlighten ourselves, through say, philosophy, literature, and art, but also have the power to degenerate and descend into darkness, exemplified by the unimaginable destruction at Dresden, Hiroshima, Nagasaki, and Dachau. As such, he saw that "we are intermediary beings," existing along a continuum between angelic and beastly possibilities of ourselves.

To fashion ourselves along optimum lines through study of the humanities, we must know our hearts, manifest imagination, discipline reason, and expand our sense of the possible. Italian humanists pointed to that divine spark of creativity, our *imago dei*, which makes humanity distinct from other creatures. It is a hard but glorious balance to achieve, living virtuously in light of such power. Humanists did not seek to displace God, but rather sought, through cultural and artistic expressions, divinity inherent in humanity.



Common Ground 2019
Opening Ceremony & Blessings