**All You Need Is Love**

One hundred years ago last month, my grandmother, Jane McInerny Howell (Slide 1—seen here ten years later with my father on her lap), at the ripe old age of twenty-four founded Chowchilla’s grammar school, a year after Orlando Robertson, along with my grandparents, had founded the town itself. Daughter of an immigrant who was born in the first year of the Great Famine and had come to Merced in the early 1870s, she attended the University of California at Berkeley and earned her teaching credential at San José Normal School, riding her horse there from Merced as her three older sisters had done, because Fresno Normal School had not yet been established. The television and newspaper stories reporting the centennial celebration of Chowchilla’s school system knew nothing of this history.

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(Slide 2) One hundred and fifty years ago yesterday, President Abraham Lincoln proclaimed over the dead at Gettysburg:

> Four score and seven years ago, our fathers brought forth on this continent a new nation, conceived in Liberty, and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal.

Vaguely echoing Pericles’ Funeral Oration at Athens, Lincoln’s oration ends:

> …we here highly resolve that these dead shall not have died in vain—that this nation, under God, shall have a new birth of freedom—and that government of the people, by the people, for the people, shall not perish from the earth.

Virtually no one remembers the two-hour speech delivered also that day by US senator, secretary of state, classicist, and Harvard president Edward Everett. Yet the less prolix but far more memorable President Lincoln could not have even gained entrance to the Harvard of his era, because both Latin (Slide 3) and Greek grammar and composition (Slide 4) were required elements on the entrance exam, along with the mathematics (Slide 5) that we still consider normal testing fare—algebra, geometry, and trigonometry; Lincoln’s son
Robert, however, did pass this test and attend Harvard.¹

Though Lincoln lacked his son’s classical training, he did love reading Euclid’s Elements in translation, which (mediated through secondary sources) came in handy for him as a surveyor in his 20s but also inspired deeper thoughts in him as a lawyer in his 40s reading it to learn logic. Euclid’s Elements, possibly the world’s most influential and best-selling textbook, written around 300 BCE at Alexandria, Egypt, presents nine common notions in Book 1, including these five (Slide 6)

1. Things which are equal to the same thing are equal to each other.
2. If equals are added to equals, the wholes (sums) are equal.
3. If equals are subtracted from equals, the remainders (differences) are equal.
4. Things that are doubles of the same are equal to one another.
5. The whole is greater than the part.²

American historian and Clark University Professor Drew McCoy has observed that Lincoln’s study of Euclid had interesting consequences: “In 1859, drawing an explicit connection between Euclid and the Declaration of Independence (Slide 7), Lincoln identified ‘the principles of Jefferson’—including, of course, the eighteenth-century Euclidean truth that ‘all men are created equal’—as ‘the definitions and axioms of free society.’”³ (Don’t you wish we learned this when taking geometry?)

But why did I, a classicist and ancient historian, begin my lecture by quoting Lincoln? Because this is how I was taught: through remarkable examples that our teachers expected us to memorize, internalize, and emulate, and they then also encouraged us to criticize, improve upon, and create from scratch; they cleverly used interdisciplinary


projects that involved daily lessons in art and music, too. Without telling us what tricolon or anaphora or asyndeton is, our English teacher asked us to memorize the entire Gettysburg Address so that we could feel what anaphora is when it trips off the tongue. Now, not everything we memorized in grammar school was Lincoln or Shakespeare—far from it, in fact. What about “The Goops”? (Slide 8)

The Goops they lick their fingers,
and the Goops they lick their knives;
They spill their broth on the tablecloth,
Oh, they lead disgusting lives!

I never noticed as a child who wrote “The Goops”, but it turns out that the author, Gelette Burgess, also created the literary genre of the “blurb” in 1907. So, when you blurb a book or your book is blurbed by someone else, I hope you’ll think of The Goops from now on.

In any case, by the time our teacher asked us to memorize Lincoln’s speech in 4th grade, I already thought of him as a hero, along with all the other magnificent women and men celebrated in the Landmark and other biographies that sat on the shelf in my bedroom. I had the great luck of being born 5th out of 8 children, and my birth order—until #8, Octavia, came along—placed me in a bedroom with a small wall of books right off my mother’s sewing room; I would fall asleep reading to the whir of the Singer sewing machine. (Slide 9) And in my reading, I became most enthralled by the stories of female heroes: Abigail Adams, Harriet Tubman, Florence Nightingale, Marie Curie, Helen Keller—the list goes on. Weekly trips to the Pasadena Public Library allowed me to branch out into sports heroes, such as Jackie Robinson, Roberto Clemente, and Roy Campanella. These biographies, along with my dad’s childhood books about animals by conservationist Thornton Burgess, with characters such as Reddy Fox (who is 100 years old this year), were my daily fare until my mom’s childhood collection of Nancy Drew mysteries took over and consumed me.

Books matter, whether on paper or tablet, and we need to do more to put them into the hands of young people at the earliest age possible and then to get them really reading them. This is why I ask all of you here today to make a donation to the Richter Center’s Honora Chapman Provost’s Award Lecture November 20, 2013 Professor of Classics and Humanities, Department of Modern and Classical Languages and Literatures
First Book Fresno fundraising effort, which will provide books to children in need. Also, you might consider volunteering with Reading and Beyond right off campus.

Each of us has had a person—parent, guardian, teacher, professor, or friend—who discerned that we have a gift for what we teach now. In my case, it was my mother who figured out that I would love languages, after she helped me wrap my mind around the idea of verb conjugations. I had been winging my way through two years of 5th and 6th-grade Spanish by guessing words, and I finally admitted to her one summer day that I didn’t have a clue what the teacher was talking about with respect to verbs (Slide 10). That half-hour of my mom tutoring me at the kitchen table literally changed my life: I remember the exquisite *eureka* moment when I finally figured out what a verb’s person and number are—as in the 3rd person singular of the verb “love” equals “she/he/it loves”—that now allows me to teach the same concepts in Latin and Greek classes. And when I finished my four years of high school Latin, thanks to my mom browbeating the school into offering it, and I was filling out some college forms, she was the one who suggested that I should write down “classics” as a possible major, and my dad completely agreed, and yet I had never even heard of this label for what I now do. Classics is the study of Latin and ancient Greek, as well as ancient history, politics, religion, literature, art, architecture, and archaeology. (Slide 11) The field encompasses over two thousand years of Mediterranean culture, spanning from Britain to North Africa to the Middle East, and I love it!

**Love.** This is what good scholarship and teaching boils down to, my friends.

**We have got to love what we are researching**—so much so that we actually regret it when we find ourselves ignoring it because of other responsibilities. (Slide 12) I have spent over two decades investigating Roman and Jewish history and literature, with special focus on the writings of the first-century Jewish general and priest Josephus. After Jerusalem was torched in 70 C.E. in the Jewish War, he spent about thirty years at Rome producing thirty volumes of history that climax with the Roman destruction of his homeland. There is still a great deal that needs to be done with his Greek texts, as well as our understanding of Jewish and Roman life in his day, because Jewish—as well as the very earliest Christian—history and writings have resided outside the traditional canon of...
my field of classics. In any case, we all owe it to ourselves and to our students to be real scholars and professionals in our fields of study, and the university needs to support us even more in this venture. **I would recommend that 3 WTUs of release be given automatically each semester to all professors who show scholarly and creative output.**

**Secondly, we must **love** what we are teaching the students** (Slide 13) so much that before each class, we reread all the materials we have assigned, and we put ourselves into their shoes: how does it **feel** to do this assignment? How might we improve the way we explore key concepts with them? If we use Power Point, we’ve got to revisit our slides before each class to see if there’s some way to make them more vivid and engaging. When we walk into the classroom the next day, we’ll feel that rush of adrenaline that simply wouldn’t be there had we not put in the leg work. A recent study by Schwartz, Hess, and Sparrow on effective law professors has made a similar argument, albeit far more elegantly than I am doing here.  

How can class be dull if I’ve survived reading the Greek of Aeschylus’s torturous choruses of doom in the *Agamemnon* before I go to class to teach it? As the chorus in this tragedy says, “learn by suffering.” If we suffer a bit with our students, we’ll definitely learn with them, too.

We all, however, have known professors who were geniuses and loved what they taught us, but for some reason, they couldn’t quite communicate this passion for the material in a way that we as students could connect with and comprehend. And this disconnect leads to frustration, sometimes anger, and definitely ignorance, which is certainly the opposite of the point of a university education. That is sad.

But there is a cure for this disconnect—and again, it’s **love. By cultivating an affection for and among one’s students** (of course, while observing the Aristotelian mean between two extremes), the learning process becomes far more enjoyable for everyone involved. *(Slide 14)* When channeled through:

~ a solid and sensibly designed curriculum,
~ high but attainable and well-articulated goals, and

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~clear expression of one’s subject knowledge and of one’s commitment to student success (and happiness in life),
this can lead to a great deal of learning and even innovative, creative thought. The right kind of affection and openness to new ideas breeds curiosity in students, because they feel inspired to investigate on their own and to come up with their own solutions. And it never hurts to inject a little humor! (Slide 15)

When resources allow, (Slide 16) we must show our students how and where we conduct our research and what fuels our love for our fields of study. In Summer 2012, Professors Kristi and Curtis Eastin, Robert Ware, David Berkey, and I shared our love for Rome, and the students had such a great time and learned so much that we hope to repeat this in Greece in Summer 2015. Having such engaged colleagues who have given so much to their students is a real blessing.

**And we must have compassion for the students.** (Slide 17) Imagine them to be yourself, your best friend, your family members—how would you feel if any of these people were treated poorly in a classroom? Crummy, I’m sure. We owe it to our students to hold class when it is scheduled and to hand back their work in a timely fashion. (Granted, this is not easy with a 4/4 load.) Yes, bad grades make students feel badly. But if these grades are delivered to the students with genuine care and clear corrections and suggestions—along with a real glimmer of hope—students can learn from these unpleasant moments of suffering to go on to complete the course successfully. Furthermore, we must hold actual and effective office hours, and provide genuinely useful advising about how to complete their GE and major requirements at a proper pace. Students here deserve the best education we can possibly deliver, despite the obvious constraints of budget, time, and administrative support. Professors should love their students—and so should everyone else on this campus.

When people, however, make decisions that harm students by denying them access to a first-rate education, there ought to be real consequences derived from genuine administrative oversight and consultation with the faculty. We must offer enough classes at the right times of day and with reasonable class caps, especially in upper division major courses. After all, the true mission of this university is to educate the students.
Also, we must hire even more tenure-track faculty to cover the curriculum that we promise our students. Contingent faculty are being overly used—they comprise just less than half the total faculty—and they are abused with lower pay even when they hold a doctorate. Half of our faculty in 2012 (619/1244) was part-time (while only 6% of the staff and less than one percent of the managers are part-time).的研究表明，几乎一半的教师因此无法提供服务，包括指导学生，这是校园中的一项重要需求。最好的大学具有高的毕业率，但我们想知道为什么他们的毕业率如此之低（最近的：14.7%在4年，35.6%在5年，48.1%在6年）。

Our students need very good instruction and mentoring, and they need it from more tenure-track faculty members who have the time to help them confidence in their future on this campus. Faculty also need to receive appropriate compensation: it’s time for the CSU leadership to acquire the funding either internally or from the Legislature specifically to improve salaries, especially for those hired after 2000, so that all of us may enjoy equal pay for equal work.

Our students are here to learn and to earn at least a bachelor’s degree, which is especially challenging for those who are educational trailblazers in their families. My field of classics, which they discover through area C2 of GE, requires that they learn a heck of a lot of details, such as inflected endings on nouns in up to five declensions with five cases and on adjectives in three declensions (and these nouns and adjectives must agree in gender, number, and case), (Slide 18) never mind the hundreds of morphological twists of the verbal adjectives, verbal nouns, and verbs themselves. We deal in lots of arcane terminology, too—really, it’s all the stuff of Harvard’s entrance exam in 1869 that you can find online. But by mastering all these details, our students can then unlock the meanings to be found in some of the most beautiful and influential literature the world has ever seen, (Slide 19) as well as in inscriptions, papyri, coins, etc. that allow us to reconstruct ancient historical events. It’s detective work, which is why classicists make excellent code breakers, and if given the training, great code writers.

Happily, the Legislature has deemed us necessary (Slide 20), since the classics and

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5 http://www.fresnostate.edu/academics/oie/quickfacts/.
Honora Chapman    Provost’s Award Lecture    November 20, 2013
Professor of Classics and Humanities, Department of Modern and Classical Languages and Literatures
humanities courses we teach at Fresno State are enshrined in California Administrative Code, Title 5, Article 5, Section 40405: General Education Breadth Requirements:

General education-breadth requirements in The California State University are so designed that, taken with the major depth program and elective credits presented by each candidate for the bachelor's degree, they will assure that graduates from the several campuses in the system have made noteworthy progress toward becoming truly educated persons. Particularly, the purpose of the breadth requirements is to provide means whereby graduates:

(a) will have achieved the ability to think clearly and logically, to find and critically examine information, to communicate orally and in writing, and to perform quantitative functions;

(b) will have acquired appreciable knowledge about their own bodies and minds, about how human society has developed and how it now functions, about the physical world in which they live, about the other forms of life with which they share that world, and about the cultural endeavors and legacies of their civilizations;

(c) will have come to an understanding and appreciation of the principles, methodologies, value systems, and thought processes employed in human inquiries.6

(Slide 21) I love my students here at Fresno State for trying to learn the Greek, Latin, and ancient literature in translation that we teach in our program in GE areas C2 and IC, and even off the GE grid in upper division Greek and Latin classes, so that they can grapple with the higher meanings and consequences of ancient Mediterranean culture in our present day. Through this material, they can identify with the challenges faced by ancient people and ponder their own place in this world as sentient human beings with responsibilities, as well as with the free will to make this world a better place. Truth,

justice, beauty, freedom, creating a family and community, war, peace, death, illness, famine, anger, sorrow, happiness—all of these human aspirations, experiences, and emotions are as real today as they were to ancient people, so the ancient accounts and artistic productions surely speak to all of us today. As the Clemente Course in the Humanities experiment has shown since 1995 with the education of people in poverty, the humanities provide intellectual stimulation and freedom; Earl Shorris has attested to this in his 2013 book, *The Art of Freedom: Teaching the Humanities to the Poor.*

In order for our students to enjoy this freedom, we must encourage them to achieve their personal best, whatever that might be. In more utilitarian terms, our Fresno State students’ attainment of excellence in classics, the wider arts and humanities, and all the other fields at our university, proves to be a great equalizer: it provides our diverse students employment as well as entrée into a world of socio-economic privilege represented by the famous private universities and the flagship public universities. Graduates from Fresno State definitely can compete with their fellow graduate students who have received bachelor’s degrees from the most prestigious institutions in the country *if*—and only if—they are given the proper education, which requires commitment at all levels of this university and the CSU system as a whole. As those British philosophers Lennon and McCartney sang, “There’s nothing you can do that can’t be done.”

We at Fresno State are part of the CSU (Slide 22), the People’s University—the very people whose equality Lincoln spoke of with such Euclidean certitude. By giving our students a voice (vox), and helping them explore the meaning of truth (veritas), we truly give them a life (vita). We owe it to ourselves and to our highly diverse student body to love what we research, to love what we teach, to love those we teach, as long as we labor in this vineyard.

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What I would like to do now in our remaining time is show you some of the treasures of the ancient humanities that we can read and ponder thanks to our study and teaching of the classical languages.

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In a nutshell, the humanities are about what it means to be human—as opposed to vegetable or mineral, though I’m sure I’ve been both of these at some point or other—and what it means to be humane. The humanities are not necessarily a playbook, currency, crystal ball, or any other kind of tool either for getting ahead in life or even for conquering other nations, though they certainly have been used as such throughout the last two millennia, ever since Cicero explained how young men could cultivate *humanitas* through good literature, which provides examples of how to speak and act in public as well as a refuge in one’s old age.

The power of the humanities, however, is truly evident when we consider, as we shall in a moment, that Homer’s *Odyssey* over 2,700 years later can inspire absolutely beautiful modern poetry, as in Chicano poet and Boston University Spanish professor Tino Villanueva’s remarkable 2013 collection, *So Spoke Penelope*. Dr. Villanueva’s own life trajectory—from migrant cotton picker as a child in Texas to furniture factory worker to Army supply clerk in Panama, where he learned the power of poetry, to student on the G.I. bill, followed by a doctorate from Boston University and eventually an American Book Award—attests to a very strong spirit of self-improvement and the *amazing* lure of *words*. Villanueva crafts these words as cannily as Penelope weaves Laertes’ shroud in the *Odyssey*—thus Homer both lives in the original Greek and is reborn in English.

Despite what all the pundits have bloviated this summer about the potential demise of the humanities, I would argue that the humanities’ transcendent value ultimately comes from them being not only wonderful sources of immediate entertainment (Slides 23—comic books, video games, and movies) but also deeply engaging objects of long-term contemplation, which is *theôria* in Greek. Aristotle considered *theôria* the highest form of thinking and necessary for the best and most fulfilling kind of life—something I would hope for all of us. Aristotle also knew that *theôria*, or contemplation, requires *skolê*, or leisure, which is the root of our word “school”. So, let’s go to school and contemplate some passages together, shall we? (Slides 24)

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9 [http://www.bu.edu/bridge/archive/2002/02-01/villanueva.htm](http://www.bu.edu/bridge/archive/2002/02-01/villanueva.htm). Villanueva originally had collected words in a notebook as a young man in his pre-Vietnam War attempt to pass the civil service exam in order to become a postal worker.