

# Viewpoints

## Reaching the highest point in the golden years

Last week I heard a minor ruckus in my outer office. A student was chomping at the bit to get registered for the next semester. The student knew the classes he wanted to take, and he was a little frustrated that he would need to wait a while before completing his registration.

This student was clearly fueled by a passion for learning that professors love to see in young college students. But, this student was not young. He appeared to be a septuagenarian, or perhaps an octogenarian. He was also part of a special program.

Utah Code 53B allows “Utah residents who have reached 62 years of age to enroll at [any state university] in classes for which they may be qualified on the basis of surplus space.” The code continues, “These persons are exempt from tuition and other charges except” for a registration fee. At WSU, this means that anyone age 62, or over, may take a class for a fee of \$10.00.

As the Utah Code states, space needs to be available. This means that regular students who are paying full tuition receive the first preference when it comes to registration. The code also indicates that students need to be qualified for the class they want to take. In simple terms, this means that a student needs to complete Physics I before moving on to Physics II. Other than those two qualifications, virtually any class at WSU is open to any senior citizen willing to pay the \$10 fee.

I have spoken with a dozen retirees who are taking advantage of this program. I find it interesting that all of the participants I have talked with have focused their studies on philosophy, political science, history, languages, science, theatre, and the classics. I haven’t spoken to a single senior citizen utilizing this program to study a

professional field. Apparently, the seniors prefer reading Plato over contemplating the four Ps of marketing.

These folks utilizing Utah Code 53B have lived full lives and are well positioned to reflect upon the things worth knowing.

Virtually all have made the decision to focus their studies on the liberal arts. This fact reminds me of one of my favorite quotes from Robert Maynard Hutchins who served as president of the University of Chicago for more than two decades.

Educated as an attorney, Hutchins viewed his own college education as

inadequate. He had not read the “Great Books” before he was assigned to teach a college course on the “Great Books.” Recognizing the deficiencies in his own

education, he quickly remedied the deficits through extensive reading.

Writing about the purpose of education, Hutchins contended: “The liberal arts are not merely indispensable; they are unavoidable. Nobody can decide for himself whether he is going to be a human being. The only question open to him is whether he will be an ignorant, undeveloped one, or one who has sought to reach the highest point he is capable of attaining. The question, in short, is whether he will be a poor liberal artist or a good

one.”

Weber State’s oldest students are using their golden years to study the liberal arts in order to reach the highest point they are capable of attaining. Many of Weber State’s younger students could learn something from their example.

### Top of Utah Voices



**Michael Vaughan**

Commentary

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