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Lecture Series: Enhancing Iowa State University’s Mission

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Noises’ falling on deaf ears seated in large auditoriums is probably the complete opposite to the view of an Iowa State University (ISU)’s Lecture Series Lecture. An enormous hall with a widespread array of seats filled with enthusiastic audience members and highly qualified and interesting speakers is generally the view of a Lecture in the Lecture Series at ISU. Lectures are an ancient, yet one of the best teaching methods; especially when there is a significant knowledge gap between the teacher and student. Despite the method of giving lectures becoming unpopular among professional educational advisers and intellectuals – many scientist continue to give lectures and students voluntarily attend them. The main reason behind them attending the lectures is that lectures are effective at exploiting the spontaneous human aptitude for spoken communication in real-time in contrast to written or electronic communication – which comes with its advantages. The Lecture Series at ISU is based on encouraging human interaction and encouraging the antediluvian culture of lectures. Located in 2582 Memorial Union, 2229 Lincoln Way, Ames 50010, the Lecture Series Office is easily accessible to anyone interested in organizing a lecture or getting to know more about the lectures. In addition to the office, the lecture series at ISU also has a website that lists all the lectures, their description, their location and timings. The lectures are held in big and small auditoriums across the whole campus. This variation between the size of lecture rooms is based on the subject of lecture, the anticipated number of audience members and the comfort level of the lecturer. The Lectures Program is a collaborative effort of the Government of Student Body and the Office of the Provost. The Lecture Series brings about an extensive variety of lectures, political debates, cultural events, such as musical performances, art and dance programs, and entertainment in the forms of films and comedy, and academic forums (“The Lecture Series” 1). It supports the Iowa State Mission of “…student-centered learning through personal, community and academic development culminating in a transformative learning experience” (“About Us” 1). The lecture series has a rich history at Iowa State University, it helps ISU accomplish its mission by being highly beneficial to not only the people attending the lecture but also for the lecturers, and the lectures cover a diversity of topics which helps cater to a large audience.

Going back to the beginning of time, the committee of the Lectures program was established at ISU in 1958. In the first year, it had a series of four speakers, a budget of less than five thousand dollars and was operated out of an English Professor’s office. Since then, the staff at the Lecture Series program has brought it a long way. Today the Lecture Series office schedules more than a hundred and thirty lectures each year (“History” 1). In addition to organizing lectures, they also assist with researching speakers, topics, scheduling and room reservations, fundraising etc. Moreover, they also manage and support the Committee on Lectures, the World Affairs Series, National Affairs Series planning committees, other student organizations and university offices planning public events. The Committee on Lectures is the funding arm of the Government of the Student Body with Support from the university, for the speakers and events. The Committee is made of students, academic disciplines and administrative offices. They work in close collaboration with student organizations, academic departments, university offices and off-campus organizations. They have a vision to provide opportunity to students to think, learn and act in a new way. They are able to do this because they recognize the need to present topics to broaden student awareness which relates the mission of Lecture Series to ISU’s mission (“About the Committee” 1). Iowa State University has a mission to provide “transformative learning experience to the students”, the Lecture Series Committee is able to help ISU fulfill that mission by providing free knowledge on a diverse variety of subjects. The Lecture Series Committee decides the topics for Lectures based on the annual series on the topics of national and international interest planned by National Affairs Committee and World Affairs Series respectively. As evident, the Lecture Series Program is a joint effort of the students, faculty and the staff members working together in an efficient environment with a focus on quality and excellence. This successful collaboration has been honored time and again for its incredibly successful effort to spread knowledge (“The Lecture Series” 1).

With the intention of spreading knowledge and increasing participation in the Lectures, the Lecture are free to not only the students and faculty of ISU but also to the general public. The Lecture Series has a mission to focus on community and academic development while supporting personal development by providing Lectures on a wide spectrum. This helps in making the higher education available to everyone without having to go through the costly procedure of classes. This lines up perfectly with the mission of Iowa State University under the ideals of Land Grant Institutions which states that “…higher education should be accessible to all…” (“History of Iowa State” 1). For students already studying at ISU, the lecture series is the way to increase their horizon outside of the classrooms. The Lecture Series provides food for thought to the developing young minds of ISU students and to the general public. With featuring lectures on game development to eating disorders, the Lectures Series covers as diverse range of lectures as the students of Iowa State itself. Hence, this makes the Lecture Series to be one of the best Programs that could help ISU accomplish it’s mission of “…student-centered learning through...community….development culminating in a transformative learning experience”. These lectures will not only cater to the interests of the people attending them but will also help people gain knowledge and develop interest in these fields. The lecture series gives people the opportunity to listen to and interact with people they idealize; an opportunity not many would like to miss. In addition to being an asset to the students, The Lecture Series also provides a platform for the lecturers to share their ideas and research with common people. Not a lot of people are inclined to read scientific journals and hence remain oblivious to the upcoming research. It gives scientists, authors, philosophers, filmmakers, etc an opportunity to educate the world about their work and motivate them to think out of the box. The Lecture Series benefits both the lecturers and the public while fulfilling the land grant mission of applied research.

As an illustration of the interesting lectures provided by The Lecture Series is the Lecture on Green Chemistry to help students understand how to reduce the use of hazardous materials at the design stage of a materials process by the father of Green Chemistry – John Warner. Some other exemplary examples to show the diverse variety of lectures held at ISU would be a lecture by Lisa Orr on being a self supporting artist and evolving her working studio, a Panel discussion on national security and human rights, a lecture by Mike Lippman about the application of classic courses to daily life, etc. Many professors substitute their classroom lectures with a lecture from the Lecture Series. The Lecture Series provides electronic attendance support for such classes. Following the land grant institution ideals, the Lecture Series provides education in practical and liberal subjects both. Again, the Lecture Series helps support ISU mission statement by inducing a respect for different disciplines in students, challenging them to think deeply, empowering them with knowledge and creating a “out-of-class experience” (“About Us” 1).

To conclude, the audiences find the lectures at the Lecture Series to be highly enjoyable as well as educational. They are inspiring, motivating and encouraging. They offer one to one interaction with knowledgeable lecturers on interesting and diverse topics.The Lecture Series tries to fulfill the mission objective of ISU to serve community, nation and world in a significant way by being open to whoever wants to attend the lecture. It also helps the university maintain its land grant mission and status by providing higher education to everyone free of cost on practical and liberal subject while also supporting research. Lecture Series is growing every year with more than a hundred lecturers coming to the university to share their knowledge. Lecture Series offers not only lectures but a wide variety of interaction forms like panel discussions, dramas, movies and comedies. This program brings together the professionals and amateurs to enhance exchange of ideas. I would encourage all the students at ISU to visit at least one lecture in the Lecture Series. With the support of the Lecture Series, the students of ISU will learn more than they planned to.