THESE THINGS ARE BETTER THAN GOLD.

IDEAS. THEORIES. VALUES. TRUTHS.

TANNER TALKS 2015 - 2016
Supported by The O.C. Tanner Trust Foundation

COLLEGE OF HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES | UtahStateUniversity
The Utah State University College of Humanities and Social Sciences is gratified by and appreciative of the O.C. Tanner Trust Foundation’s continued support of the college’s Tanner Talks series. This report on the 2015-2016 academic year effort underscores the series’ impact on our community of scholars – both faculty and students – as well as local residents.

Within the compact established in 1992 at the advent – now tradition – of Tanner Talks, the objective of and hope for the lectures was stated in black and white:

“To strengthen the education of students at Utah State University in the field of humanistic studies, broadly conceived, by exposing them to the most distinguished national and international scholars in the ethical, aesthetic, spiritual and intellectual investigation of the human condition.” (O.C. Tanner Lecture Series agreement)

Here are just two examples:

Nearly 100 young Native Americans from reservations in Utah’s Four Corners area traveled to Logan to stand among USU students in a lecture by Native American poet Sherman Alexie. The following day USU inaugurated its first-ever Native Aggies Day to introduce these young people to Utah’s only land-grant university and, naturally, Aggie ice cream.

National Public Radio’s Kitchen Sisters lectured, but also shared their storytelling know-how in a two-day workshop with USU’s Utah Public Radio reporters and producers. Among the resulting inspiration was a very moving segment by undergraduate Holly Cobabe in which victims of eating disorders discussed the urgent need for a state-wide dialogue.
In sitting down in a group discussion with global thinker Fareed Zakaria, student Jeff Sonderegger wanted to know less about the analyst’s political insights and more about some basic things. “I asked him what the first one or two hours of his day looked like when he wasn’t traveling,” says Sonderegger, a 2016 liberal arts graduate who in May was commissioned as a second lieutenant in the U.S. Army. 

The thing that is most interesting to me in talking to someone who’s obviously a very successful person is his daily practices,” said Sonderegger. “I feel that people’s daily lives contribute to what kind of person they are and what they can accomplish,” he said. For the record, Zakaria begins his day by scanning a multitude of news sources and making breakfast for his wife and children.

People’s daily lives contribute to what kind of person they are.
American journalist and author whose insights on global politics have aired on every major news outlet, including in regular columns in Newsweek and the New York Times. His show, “Fareed Zakaria GPS,” airs weekly on CNN. He’s described by Time managing editor Richard Stengel as “one of the premier global intellectuals.” (April 5, 2016)

A forceful and thoughtful Native American poet who is, perhaps ironically, best known for the Newbery Award-winning young adult novel, “The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-time Indian,” and the film “Smoke Signals.” He’s been described by The New Yorker as one of the 20 best writers in this century. (Oct. 29, 2015)

The Kitchen Sisters – non-sibling producers and writers who’ve introduced National Public Radio fans to kitchens around the globe, in the process informing us how food shapes our lives and our stories. Among the series they’ve aired is “Hidden Kitchens,” heard on “Morning Edition.” (April 4, 2016)

An expert in “preventive diplomacy” and “faith-based diplomacy” who, as president of the International Center for Religion and Diplomacy, worked on-site to, among other things, end the 21-year civil war in Sudan and secure the release from the Taliban of 21 Korean missionaries. (Oct. 13, 2015)

A forceful and thoughtful Native American poet who is, perhaps ironically, best known for the Newbery Award-winning young adult novel, “The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-time Indian,” and the film “Smoke Signals.” He’s been described by The New Yorker as one of the 20 best writers in this century. (Oct. 29, 2015)

The Kitchen Sisters – non-sibling producers and writers who’ve introduced National Public Radio fans to kitchens around the globe, in the process informing us how food shapes our lives and our stories. Among the series they’ve aired is “Hidden Kitchens,” heard on “Morning Edition.” (April 4, 2016)

In our track of seeking high–profile speakers who will draw in greater community participation and maintain strong faculty and student interest, the College of Humanities and Social Sciences has contracted with memoirist and novelist Cheryl Strayed for a spring 2017 lecture. She is visiting USU at the behest of English Professor Jennifer Sinor, an instructor of creative nonfiction.

Strayed is the author of the 2012 best-selling “Wild: From Lost to Found on the Pacific Crest Trail.” She will share with listeners here in Cache County the journey to her ultimate conclusion that “fear, to a certain extent, is born of a story we tell ourselves – and so I chose to tell myself a different story … .”

Arrangements with other speakers are on-going.

We at the USU College of Humanities and Social Sciences strive to utilize the generous Tanner Talks funding in a manner that is consistent not only with the mission of the O.C. Tanner Trust Foundation, but of our college as well. In orientations with new students, Dean John Allen makes clear the college’s purpose is “preparing students to address the complex challenges that lie ahead by thinking critically, thinking creatively and thinking big.” And at the same time, he says, “We try to cultivate in ourselves and in our students the freedom to explore ideas, cultures and new ways of problem-solving. We seek to be people who affirm the dignity and honor of all human beings.”