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Receiving a liberal arts education is beneficial to most aspects of life. Not only does it give students the opportunity to learn outside their majors of study, but a liberal arts education also develops students into well-rounded people who have a deeper understanding of the world around them. However, when it comes to the sciences, the attitude of many is that general education courses or classes in other disciplines are a waste of time and credit hours. Why is it so important, in such a technical field, to learn topics such as religion, foreign language, and the arts? Taking it one step further, how is a liberal arts education beneficial to one's ability to perform research in the sciences, for example, in the field of microbiology?

As a Biology and Hispanic studies double major, although these topics are very different, the skills I learn in each overlap and help me in the other. When a problem arises in the lab, I can problem solve using my biological background. But, if no solution is found, I can take on the same problem using a different approach that I have learned in other fields of study. Similarly, when I encounter problems in my Hispanic studies classes, I have the ability to use a more scientific approach to problem solving when needed. I truly believe that because of the liberal arts education I received at Illinois Wesleyan, I have gained the ability to be good at problem solving while using different perspectives.

This ability to use different perspectives will serve me greatly as I plan enter a career in healthcare; a field which will require me to be able to problem solve on a daily basis while taking many different factors into consideration. Along with research, Dr. Cozy's microbiology class has shown me how I can combine my two disciplines of study. Taking a trip to the McLean County Health Department helped me realize that my Hispanic Studies and Biology backgrounds can come together to improve public health, especially in a town such as Bloomington, which has a large Spanish-speaking population. The Hispanic Studies portion of my education has not only helped me develop my language skills in Spanish, but has led me to be open to different cultures and ideas, something I think is vital to being able to serve others in a healthcare environment. With this in mind, my future career aspirations are to apply to dual medical and public health programs this June, something I never considered until my last year here. The collaboration between all of us in the lab has given me the encouragement that I needed to adjust to working independently in a research environment and the reassurance that there are many different fields I can pursue, that do not have to be the traditional biology pre-med route I once believed I had to follow. Aside from learning certain technical aspects pertaining to microbial research, working in the lab has led me to become closer to my fellow students and helped me see how great it is when we all collaborate and work together to help each other reach our goals.