



Opinion



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Our view: Students, colleges important to city

By Tribune editorial staff

Here's a puzzle. It's Thursday evening, not very late, and the grocery store is packed.

The lot is full of cars and the inside is full of shoppers. What's going on? College students are back in town.

Students from the University of Wisconsin-La Crosse, Viterbo University and Western Wisconsin Technical College have a big impact on the community, as do the institutions that they attend.

In 2001, UW-L officials said that school alone makes \$5.1 million worth of local purchases in a year. The payroll then was \$46 million a year. That's quite an economic impact, and it does not include Viterbo or WWTC.

But besides economics, there is a big cultural impact. Viterbo's Bright Star and NexStar music and theater productions bring top quality culture and entertainment to the area. That would not happen without Viterbo's Fine Arts Center.

UW-L brings in speakers and music in its Lectures and Concerts series. Both UW-L and Viterbo offer their own theater and music productions. La Crosse would be a very different place without the presence of these institutions. Just the cultural and intellectual opportunities presented by the three schools is worth whatever inconveniences and drawbacks might come with being a "college town."

And the economic impact makes other things possible. The alliance between all three higher education institutions and two health-care institutions in La Crosse is an example of how education can also be a driving force in economic development. So, welcome back, students. You might not realize how important your schools are to the economic, intellectual and cultural life of La Crosse.

Have a great year.

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