Helen Fang premieres documentary project "STEM of our Humanities"

The documentary project included interviews from students, alumni and faculty, and was the culmination of four months' worth of work.

By Anastasia Efremova
STAFF WRITER

The student-produced documentary "STEM of our Humanity" premiered in the Thomas Moore Auditorium during lunch in an effort to uncover the stigma surrounding the humanities April 16.

The video project about the importance of the humanities was shown to Warriors during lunch. Writer Helen Fang originally planned the documentary as her passion project but later applied it to her International Baccalaureate project as well. The IB project is required for students pursuing the IB diploma, and can be about anything students choose as long as they can later reflect on the process. The film was divided into different segments, with each focusing on a different subtopic.

According to Fang, the project aimed to show Troy students, who attend a science, technology, engineering and math-oriented school, that the humanities play a significant role in society regardless of the field they are in. The main argument when creating "STEM of our Humanity" was that there is no STEM without the humanities.

"The whole purpose of STEM is to advance in the sciences, to achieve these scientific discoveries for the purpose of helping people," Fang said. "[However], if you are not aware of the problems of society or the constituency you are representing, how are you able to effectively come about your goal?"

The team began production on the project in January and continued working on it until a couple days before the premiere. Since Fang came up with the idea, she took the lead in writing the script, finding interviewees, conducting interviews and overall developing the project. Video editor Amy Pham was in charge of filming and editing, while publicist Gia Desai played a creative and publicity role in the process.

In total, the "STEM of our Humanities" showcase brought in about 200 Warriors. According to Fang, the project is unique because of its appeal to a wide variety of people. The team is currently furthering its influence outside of Troy.

"We did not anticipate it to be so big, but as we kept going, we realized [that] if we really want to do this well, there is a lot more work we [need to] put into it," Fang said. "We are currently working on a website that reveals more of the behind the scenes process."

Throughout the process, Fang, Pham and Desai collaborated for two hours a week discussing ideas and spent weekends working on this project, aiming to showcase it before the testing season. Overall, Fang spent over 125 hours on the project, including writing and filming. After two months of recording footage, Pham spent two weeks editing the final video. Desai coordinated publicity, made the trailer and helped with the script and film shots.

The team experienced challenges in communicating with interviewees and managing time commitment. Fang reached out to potential interviewees through personal connections and emails, but there were several times when recipents did not respond or declined to participate. According to Pham, the time commitment for the project required numerous sleepless nights and working long weeks.

"It was very tedious and thought out, and that [was] on everyone's behalf," Pham said. "The planning was good, but I think that [it] took the most time, and then [during] editing, I felt a bit rushed."

According to Fang, despite the challenges, the entire process felt worth it in the end. After witnessing the impact of the documentary on so many people, the team felt they accomplished their goal, Fang said.

"I was so happy, I almost cried tears of joy," Fang said. "I think somewhere in the beginning it stopped being a passion project and [became] an extension of who I am. I was really changing people's minds and hopefully changing their hearts on a topic that is near and dear to me."



PHOTO COURTESY OF HELEN FANG

TERRIFIC TEAM: *(left to right) Project collaborators Helen Fang, Gia Desai and Amy Pham at the premiere of their documentary.*