

Academic Mission

The College of Liberal Arts and Sciences exists to provide an atmosphere of responsible learning to a varied group of students who are called to intellectual, moral, and professional leadership. To fulfill these goals, the College seeks to promote intellectual curiosity and rigor within the university; to instill the fundamentals of critical insight, mature judgment, and independent thinking; and to awaken in its students a sense of the importance of values and the moral responsibility of caring for others and working for the betterment of society.

Villanova has always openly and proudly declared that it is a Catholic institution of higher learning. The University maintains a strong respect for the beliefs of its diverse community of faculty, students, and staff. In keeping with its central place in a Catholic university, the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences has a special commitment to the Christian belief that creation is an expression of the divine truth through the redemptive life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, the incarnate Word of God. It also seeks to provide a Christian intellectual and moral environment, and believes that it is the common right of all to participate in creation, to seek truth, and to apply such truth attained to protect and enrich personal and communal life.

Villanova's special Augustinian heritage enables the College to draw upon the dynamic legacy of St. Augustine, whose passionate pursuit of wisdom, understood through the metaphor of one heart and one mind, inspires its own quest for knowledge in open, intelligent, responsible, and mutually respectful interaction of points of view. This legacy is classically illustrated by the Augustinian Order's impact on the medieval universities, its distinguished cultivation of Renaissance art, and its fostering of the scientific discoveries of Gregor Mendel. It is further expressed in the conviction that all authentic human wisdom is ultimately in harmony with Divine Wisdom, and it invites collaboration with other Christians and peoples of other traditions who might share at least the general features and dynamics of this Augustinian vision.

In light of this legacy, the College has developed a diversified academic program and a core curriculum that provide students with a scale of well-defined universal values that equips them to be wise critics of the society in which they live, and which sustains a moral base and social consciousness that transcends economic barriers and questions of race, gender, and creed.

The academic mission of the College is intimately connected with its Core Curriculum. The courses in the Core Curriculum treat a broad range of disciplines from a variety of approaches; at the same time, the Core strives to ensure depth of study and intellectual sophistication while recognizing that learning implies different modes of inquiry. The goals of the Core are to:

- Achieve a synthesis of knowledge that provides a basis for informed judgment, not simply “fact finding.” This includes learning to think and process information in a critical manner.
- Promote literacy as a foundation for intelligent discourse and the articulation of informed views. This goal acknowledges that literacy spans all disciplines, and undergraduates should demonstrate an ability to understand and utilize a wide variety of information (e.g., scientific, quantitative, cross-cultural, etc.) to articulate said views.
- Define culture in a broad sense, educating students to understand and to appreciate the interrelated patterns of customary beliefs and practices, social forms, aesthetics, and material traits that act to define a culture and its position within a larger historical and intellectual framework. Students should develop an understanding and appreciation of the diversity of cultures and experiences as well as the development of a multicultural and international perspective.
- Acknowledge that our world is vibrant and continuously redefined, not simply a static version of the past. Thus, we challenge students to understand that the present is recognizably formed from past influences. In order to assess the present and arrive at a view of its future, students must be educated to scrutinize and bring into perspective the relationship of the present day with that of the past.

- Prepare students to become active and responsible participants within society, developing an understanding of ethical responsibilities and valuing communal responsibilities.
- Encourage personal development in preparing students to regard themselves as citizens living in society, who have respect for the individual as well as the feeling of belonging to a world community.

The College of Liberal Arts and Sciences is committed to sustaining, improving, and monitoring the effectiveness of our academic programs, guided by a comprehensive assessment plan focused on student learning outcomes. Each academic department has developed their own assessment plan for evaluating your learning experience. Please see your department/program chair or contact Dr. Seth Matthew Fishman (Office of the Dean, SAC 105) for more information. For more information on learning outcomes assessment, please visit <https://www1.villanova.edu/university/liberal-arts-sciences/about/outcomes.html>.