Essential Elements of a Vanderbilt University Liberal Arts Education

At Vanderbilt University, a liberal arts education is a foundation for creative expression, critical thinking, and moral and ethical reasoning. A student educated in the liberal arts at Vanderbilt University shall acquire:

- depth of knowledge in a chosen field of study;
- breadth of knowledge through exposure to a variety of disciplines represented by the liberal arts tradition;
- excellence in writing skills, as evidenced by the ability to effectively articulate ideas and defend positions;
- an understanding of diverse modes of thinking and of evaluating information;
- a global and historical perspective of human experience through the exploration of a variety of cultural forms and practices.

Students educated in the liberal arts at Vanderbilt University will have acquired the foundations for creative expression, critical thinking, and moral and ethical reasoning. These foundations will foster the development of students as future leaders in their chosen fields and professions. The proposed liberal arts curriculum is designed to foster the intellectual rigor expected of students broadly educated in the traditions of the liberal arts. A liberal arts education at Vanderbilt will encompass both depth and breadth of knowledge. Depth, which is achieved by completion of a program of study leading to one of the majors in the College of Arts and Science, develops both confidence and competence in one area of knowledge and is a stepping-stone toward a variety of post-graduate options and experiences. Breadth, which is achieved by completion of courses in a variety of disciplines beyond the major, covering different modes of thinking and expression, is designed to foster qualities of mind, and to promote a lifelong intellectual curiosity. The requirements of the curriculum for breadth demand that students become exposed to areas of study that they might not otherwise explore. At Vanderbilt University, a liberal arts education must address aspects of human diversity and challenge students to understand their world from a multi-cultural perspective. The vast array of options for study within the College of Arts and Science combined with the breadth requirement, forces students to make choices about their own educations. Thus, students are encouraged, with the counsel of their advisors, to think deeply about their own educational decisions.