

## The Liberal Arts

An education in the liberal arts at Lewis & Clark serves both as an opportunity to explore classical and enduring ideas and as a touchstone for fresh inquiry. Students are encouraged to examine the heritage of Western civilization in the context of wider comparative and critical perspectives. They wrestle with difficult questions and their changing solutions, and by working intensively with the faculty they develop their abilities as thoughtful readers, effective writers, and articulate participants in intellectual discourse.

A liberal arts education at Lewis & Clark combines three interdependent curricular elements: the departmental major, a set of elective courses, and the General Education curriculum. In accordance with the principles of the liberal arts, the curriculum is structured so that roughly one-third of the credits are in the major, one-third are in electives, and one-third are in General Education. The major provides an opportunity to study a subject in depth and to master the modes of thought and analysis necessary to advance that study. Electives enable the student to try out and develop new interests. The General Education curriculum supports and enhances the other elements; it provides the general foundations for liberal learning. Its courses expand students' perspectives and essential skills, helping them become educated and thoughtful contributors to society.

Lewis & Clark considers the following elements to be essential to a liberal arts education:

- Mastery of the fundamental techniques of intellectual inquiry: effective writing and speaking, active reading, and critical and imaginative thinking.
- Exposure to the major assumptions, knowledge, and approaches in the fine arts, humanities, natural sciences, and social sciences.
- Critical understanding of important contemporary and historical issues using modes of thought that are evaluative as well as descriptive and analytic, and that consider the relationship between thought and action.
- Awareness of international and cross-cultural issues and gender relations.
- Application of theory and knowledge developed in the liberal arts to the search for informed, thoughtful, and responsible solutions to important human problems.

The curriculum is built around these essentials, and the members of the faculty and the administration place their skills, resources, and services in support of these goals.