

Lesson 19: Lecture Notes

What is meant by the phrase “liberal studies” or “liberal arts education”?

According to the Encyclopedia Britannica, liberal studies is “imparting general knowledge and developing general intellectual capacities.”

The goal of liberal arts education, according to the *Center of Inquiry in the Liberal Arts*, “is to create an attitude of intellectual openness, especially to inquiry, discovery, new ideas, and varied perspectives.”

KVCC’s Associates in Arts in Liberal Studies [AALS] program provides a foundation of general knowledge in the humanities, social sciences, math, general sciences, while fostering intellectual inquiry through critical thinking, problem solving, self-reflection, ethics, and sensitivity to diversity.

Further, KVCC’s AALS program has been designed around five specific outcomes that are aimed at a liberal arts education:

- 1) Demonstrate effective communication by means of listening, speaking, reading and writing in varied situations.
- 2) Demonstrate mathematical skills, critical analysis, and logical thinking to solve problems and interpret quantitative information.
- 3) Demonstrate an understanding of the human life process, individual development, thinking process, and behavior.
- 4) Demonstrate comprehension and the application of research methods and scientific inquiry.
- 5) Demonstrate a knowledge of different groups and organizations in societies and respect for varied cultural values.

Being mindful of these five specific outcomes as you are working toward your AALS degree can provide perspective of how various classes contribute to the overall program goals. Also along your educational journey at KVCC, there are opportunities to collect and save evidence of how you have successfully met these five outcomes. You can create a “portfolio” of your college work to showcase your competencies.

What specific evidence or work to date from your classes might you be able to save to demonstrate activity toward any of the five program outcomes?

The goal of KVCC as a community college, including the AALS program, is centered on the concept of an “educated person” who can:

- Function competently and responsibly as entry level members of their respective professions and trades;
- Communicate clearly, effectively, and persuasively in both the written and spoken word;
- Utilize resources and technology as lifelong learners in pursuit of both their personal and professional goals
- Recognize opportunities for career advancement through transfer programs with other colleges and universities;
- Solve problems and make decisions based upon logical thinking and analytical skills;
- Respect cultural, ethnic, and intellectual diversity as involved members of their communities.

As you can see from comparing the AALS outcomes and the elements of the educated person, there are similarities. In essence, one who meets the liberal studies outcomes can be called an “educated person.”

Besides calling one’s self an educated person, are these liberal arts educational outcomes surrounding general knowledge and skill desirable in the workplace?

One answer can be found in the results of a nation poll conducted by Hart Research Associates (2007) entitled “How should colleges prepare students to succeed in today’s global economy”:

1. The ability to work well in teams—especially with people different from yourself
2. An understanding of science and technology and how these subjects are used in real-world settings
3. The ability to write and speak well
4. The ability to think clearly about complex problems
5. The ability to analyze a problem to develop workable solutions
6. An understanding of global context in which work is now done
7. The ability to be creative and innovative in solving problems
8. The ability to apply knowledge and skills in new settings
9. The ability to understand numbers and statistics
10. A strong sense of ethics and integrity

So it would seem that having a solid liberal arts education is desirable and therefore marketable (another reason to be consciously collecting evidence of meeting the AALS program outcomes).

At KVCC the AALS program is a two year program and designed as a first step in the process of obtaining one's four year degree. Now this begs the question, are four year universities and colleges concerned with a liberal arts education? Well, you probably can guess that the answer is yes.

Take a look at the following quotes from three universities in Maine:

University of Maine, Augusta

The University of Maine at Augusta, a regional state university, provides baccalaureate and select associate degrees to meet the educational, economic and cultural needs of Central Maine. Based on a common **liberal arts** core for all degree programs, UMA delivers professional programs to non-traditional, traditional and place-bound students.

An **educated person** exhibits knowledge and wisdom; recognizes and respects the diversity of nature and society; demonstrates problem solving skills; engages in planning and managing practices; navigates the on-line world; writes and speaks well; acts with integrity; and appreciates the traditions of art, culture, and ideas. Developing these abilities is a life-long process.

University of Maine, Farmington

We are committed to the belief that a **liberal education** in a residential setting is the best preparation for careers and for citizenship. Because all our graduates, including those who have studied in pre-professional programs, are liberally educated, they are creative problem solvers who have learned how to learn and how to work on complex challenges with people from a variety of backgrounds and fields.

A liberal arts education liberates individuals from the particularity of their pre-college lives and provides entry into larger communities, both intellectual and social. At the same time, a liberal arts education liberates students to find their way in a complex, interconnected world both as individuals and as members of various communities. A liberal arts education combines the discovery of new perspectives with the acquisition of core knowledge and transferable skills to empower students to be successful in a rapidly changing world. In the end, a liberal arts education offers what life post-college in a global world demands: the capacity to negotiate the tension between personal freedom and social responsibility.

University of Maine, Orono

The University of Maine is not just a place to prepare yourself for a good JOB: it is that, but it's also a place to prepare yourself for a rich and fulfilling LIFE. The curriculum helps with part of this preparation. Each program is based upon a foundation in the **liberal arts and sciences** to ensure that University of Maine graduates are broadly educated persons who can contribute in many ways beyond their technical expertise. But a big part of this liberalizing education takes place outside the classroom by immersion in a university community that celebrates the arts, treasures the truth, defends freedom of thought and expression, and cherishes human racial, ethnic, and cultural diversity.

These statements demonstrate that universities are concerned with more than career and professional training. There is also an educational focus on personal growth and civic participation and contribution.

To fulfill these liberal arts education missions, you will find that four year universities and colleges require all students regardless of their major to complete common **general education** requirements, sometimes referred to as the general education core.

UMA General Education Core

It is the intention of The University of Maine at Augusta that every degree graduate will be prepared to function in our society as an effective and informed citizen. To this end, the faculty has designed a set of minimum expectations that students are expected to satisfy. These aspirations are defined by core skills, competencies, and abilities as well as knowledge based learning experiences that are the grounds for the **General Education** Requirements.

UMA's specific general education requirements

<http://www.uma.edu/coreandgeneralrequirements.html>

UMF General Education Core

Thus, a liberal arts education liberates and empowers. Whereas a student's major empowers him/her to master a specific discipline and excel within the context of a particular field, the role of **General Education** in a liberal arts education is to liberate and empower the student as a citizen and inquirer in the broader world.

UMF's specific general education requirements

<http://catalog.umf.maine.edu/show.php?type=subcategory&id=28>

UMaine General Education Core

Every University of Maine academic program is based upon a strong foundation in the liberal arts and sciences. The University's goal is to ensure that all of its graduates, regardless of the academic major they pursued, are broadly educated persons who can appreciate the achievements of civilization, understand the tensions within it, and contribute to resolving them. This component of every program is called **general education**, and it amounts to about one third of every program.

UMaine's specific general education requirements

<http://catalog.umaine.edu/content.php?catoid=49&navoid=564>

Though UMA, UMF and UMaine are concerned with providing a liberal arts education as part of their general education curriculum, by reviewing the three links above, you would see that the specific general education requirements for these three Maine universities differ. This is why students at KVCC in the AALS program who are interested in transferring to a four year university or college after completing the AALS program should be mindful of the specific general education requirements of the school in which they wish to transfer. The numerous electives that comprises KVCC's AALS program provides "openness" and "flexibility" to allow students to customize their classes around the specific general education requirements of another school. Then upon transfer, many of the general education expectation will have already been met.

In the state of Maine, an articulation agreement known as Advantage U exists between the Maine Community College System and the University of Maine System. Advantage U provides the opportunity for Maine community college students who successfully complete their AALS degree to transfer to one of Maine's seven universities with "guaranteed admission" and "advanced standing". To participate, students must enroll in the Advantage U program prior to completing 30 credits at the community college. To learn more see:

http://www.advantageu.me.edu/how_au_works.html

A resource that is helpful to students looking to transfer to one of Maine's universities is known as "Maine Street." This transfer equivalency tool allows students to compare how classes at one school would transfer to another school. For example using "Maine Street," one would find that KVCC's College Composition course, Eng 101, would be equal to UMA's Eng 101 College Writing class. Using "Maine Street" can ensure that students who are planning to transfer are on the right track.

[Click here](#) to access "Maine Street" directly.

Summary

A liberal arts education is an important part of KVCC's AALS program and the general education requirements of four year universities. Liberal arts education focuses on both knowledge and skills. In Maine one can get a head start in meeting university general education requirements by completing an Associates in Arts in Liberal Studies program at a community college.

Student Resource:

Take a look at the link for UMaine's College of Liberal Arts and Sciences to see a list of degrees offered, including minors: <http://umaine.edu/las/academics/>

This can aid in expanding the knowledge of the possible career areas that build on the LAE focus.