The College of Liberal Arts and Sciences (LAS) has four missions: scholarly inquiry and the generation of knowledge, preparation of individuals for an array of careers and professions, service to the public, and the provision of the intellectual core of the University. The college shares the first three missions with professional schools and other colleges on this campus, but the last mission is uniquely the responsibility of the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences. By fulfilling this responsibility, the college helps develop broadly educated individuals who are committed to or characterized by open inquiry, critical thinking, effective communication, and responsiveness to the needs of individuals and society.

Students in the college are expected to understand the content of and to develop skills in areas that reflect the overall purpose of the college: fluency and facility in English; literacy in at least one additional language; broad exposure to a number of different disciplines; and intensive study in one discipline (or an interdisciplinary program). The student has a wide choice of courses to satisfy these requirements; however, ultimately he or she must plan a diverse and intensive program of study, prepare for an occupational, professional and intellectual future, and develop that clarity and range of mind that is the goal of educated people.