

ENVISION 2030

LIBERAL ARTS & HUMANITIES

June 2017

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For North Dakota University System to reinvigorate the conversation and perception surrounding Liberal Arts & Humanities in the state

Goals:

A relative wealth of information has entered the public sphere in recent years regarding Liberal Arts & Humanities as they apply to the workforce. Namely, that the soft skills delivered by through writing, public speaking, philosophy or history classes are the ones that create the foundation from which students learn to think and apply themselves critically. These arguments made on behalf of creating well-rounded workers are positive, but we seek to create more than just well-rounded workers, we must strive to create well-rounded and engaged individuals.

From the breakout session through the Pillar discussion held at Valley City State University, and later discussions among the team members, we expanded on the initial goals, listed below.

2019: Continue focus on liberal arts/humanities as programming to create lifelong learners.

2021: Advance scholarly faculty to embrace critical thinking and discovery.

2030: Increase attention to the need for well-rounded, educated citizens.

Traditionally the core of college and university education, the liberal arts remain central and vital to college and university learning in the twenty-first century. The rationale for the liberal arts comprises three elements.

1. Study in the liberal arts imparts fundamental skills and aptitudes of lifelong service and applicability. Among these skills and aptitudes are reading, writing, speaking, and critical thinking--all essential to individual aspirations, constructive citizenship, and productive labor.
2. The liberal arts are the keystone of general education. General education, in turn, fulfills the American ideal of college and university education. College and university education in America is an aspirational enterprise. It assumes the right and capacity of all college and university students to be informed and to think seriously about their world, their work, their country, and their lives.
3. Disciplines of the liberal arts are important to the research mission. They pursue basic and applied knowledge that informs our heritage and enriches our lives. Scholars of the liberal arts in public colleges and universities have an especial mandate to pursue research pertinent to their own states and communities, at the same time as they enlarge knowledge beyond borders.

Strong programs in the liberal arts, too, are a good fit with the hard-working, producerist culture of North Dakota. As the Association of American Universities affirms, “believe robust humanities education is critical to cultivating a broadly educated workforce ready to compete in the knowledge-based, global economy of the 21st Century.” The university system must meet this challenge.

The following elements are basic to meeting the challenge for the liberal arts.

1. Evaluate the parameters of general education in the university system. While maintaining the minimal requirements already in place, consider the elevation of standards so as to produce graduates with better basic skills and stronger general knowledge.
2. Provide resources, such as summer fellowships and grants-in-aid, that close the gap between the liberal arts and the hard sciences in research support, with the aim of cultivating a robust research culture in the liberal arts disciplines.
3. Provide board and system affirmation of the importance of the liberal arts by bringing scholars and leaders of the liberal arts into board and system consultations with stakeholders.
4. Make the liberal arts more salient in the system and the state through the support of endowed chairs and centers for research, learning, and service.