



STOGoals: College-wide Goals for Student Learning

As a residential liberal arts college rooted in the Christian gospel, nourished by its Lutheran heritage, and enlivened by global perspectives, St. Olaf offers a rigorous undergraduate education that encompasses the entire collegiate experience. Student learning is nurtured not only in classrooms, labs, libraries, and studios, but also in residence halls, rehearsal rooms, practice fields, worship services, student employment, community organizations, and off-campus programs.

Students bring to the college a wide variety of gifts, experiences, backgrounds, and beliefs, and they pursue many different paths to a St. Olaf degree. While their curricular and co-curricular experiences may vary, they share a common destination: to become “seekers of truth” and “responsible and knowledgeable citizens of the world.” To that end, St. Olaf College aims for all its students to achieve the following goals for student learning, developed both within and beyond the classroom.

Intentional and holistic self-development – Students will nurture and connect their intellectual, spiritual, physical, social, and emotional gifts.

For example, students will be able to:

- Describe accurately their personal strengths, limitations, skills, interests, and values
- Make good decisions about their health, safety, and relationships, and their resources of time, talent, and money
- Persist, adapt, and grow when experiencing a challenge, disappointment, or failure
- Reflect on, discuss, and develop informed convictions about faith, ethics, and values
- Speak and act in ways that respect others and build community
- Venture with confidence into new intellectual, creative, and social realms

Students can develop these abilities through experiences such as:

- Completing a General Education Course in Studies in Physical Movement
- Conferring with a faculty advisor, a dean of students, or a staff member in choosing courses, programs, or co-curricular activities
- Working with the Academic Support Center to enhance study strategies
- Leading a student organization
- Being a Junior Counselor, Resident Assistant, Senior Hall Coordinator, or Building Assistant
- Studying off-campus
- Attending a Wellness Center program

Broad knowledge of human cultures and the natural world – Students will use tools and ideas from many fields of study to understand human experiences, natural phenomena, and the relationships among them.

For example, students will be able to:

- Create, perform, or respond critically to artistic works
- Analyze literatures, languages, histories, faith traditions, and ethical systems
- Recognize both the opportunities and the obligations created by domestic and global diversity
- Explain important patterns in human behaviors, relationships, cultures, and institutions, and the intersections among them
- Use scientific methods to investigate the natural world
- Draw on knowledge from several different fields to understand a topic or research an issue

Students can develop these abilities through experiences such as:

- Completing General Education courses in Literary Studies, Historical Studies in Western Culture, and Scientific Exploration and Discovery
- Performing in a dance ensemble or theater production
- Rooming with someone who grew up in another country
- Attending performances at the Guthrie or Mixed Blood Theater hosted by Student Support Services
- Completing courses or programs that satisfy more than one General Education requirement simultaneously
- Volunteering in the Northfield community
- Using information and ideas from a variety of courses in completing a course assignment

Specialized knowledge of a particular field or topic – Students will develop deep knowledge of a field of study and its distinctive modes of inquiry, creation, and expression.

For example, students will be able to:

- Understand the subject matter associated with a specific field, practice, or topic – terms, concepts, classic and contemporary scholarship, controversies, and current issues
- Use methods of inquiry characteristic of the field to investigate a specific question or issue
- Use tools or techniques characteristic of the field to demonstrate, create, or perform
- Think like a scholar or practitioner in the field (a historian, an artist, an economist, a psychologist, an educator, an Asian Studies specialist, etc.)
- Recognize connections between an area of specialized knowledge and other fields

Students can develop these abilities through experiences such as:

- Completing any major or concentration
- Working as a student assistant in an academic department
- Participating in intercollegiate athletics
- Being a peer educator, tutor, or advisor
- Singing or playing in a music ensemble
- Conducting research with a faculty member through the Collaborative Undergraduate Research and Inquiry (CURI) program

***Critical thinking and inquiry* – Students will investigate, analyze, critique, and construct arguments.**

For example, students will be able to:

- Read carefully, critically, and reflectively
- Ask insightful and sophisticated questions
- Conduct systematic, imaginative and effective academic research
- Understand and use both quantitative and qualitative information
- Articulate, critique, and support arguments with compelling evidence and sound reasoning
- Revise a point of view in response to new arguments and information
- Reflect critically on the meaning and truth of religious claims, including those of Christianity

Students can develop these abilities through experiences such as:

- Completing General Education courses in First-Year Writing, Biblical and Theological Studies, and Abstract and Quantitative Reasoning
- Competing on the St. Olaf debate team
- Attending worship services at St. Olaf or in another faith community
- Conferring with a librarian in planning a significant research project
- Having conversations about important issues with classmates or residence hall neighbors
- Attending events sponsored by the Political Awareness Committee

***Effective communication and collaboration* – Students will convey ideas with clarity, and work constructively with others.**

For example, students will be able to:

- Make writing and speaking choices that reflect understanding of audience and purpose
- Write clear, well-constructed, and engaging prose in a variety of genres
- Listen attentively and empathically
- Speak persuasively, confidently, and expressively
- Collaborate productively with others, knowing when and how to lead, and when and how to support the leadership of another
- Model and foster respectful dialogue and civil discourse
- Understand and express ideas in more than one language

Students can develop these abilities through experiences such as:

- Completing General Education courses in Oral Communication and Writing in Context
- Working as an Admissions tour guide
- Living in a language Honor House
- Making a presentation about a research project to a community group
- Tutoring in the Academic Support Center
- Speaking in chapel
- Majoring in a foreign language

***Insightful integration and application of learning* – Students will synthesize and apply their knowledge and skills in creating, performing, innovating, and problem-solving.**

For example, students will be able to:

- Learn in a variety of settings and with a variety of people
- Connect information and ideas from different learning experiences
- Evaluate and apply religious, moral, and ethical values to contemporary challenges and life decisions
- Create original and imaginative intellectual works
- Approach artistic pursuits critically and with imagination
- Draw on prior knowledge to solve new intellectual and practical problems

Students can develop these abilities through experiences such as:

- Completing General Education courses in Artistic Studies, Integrated Scientific Topics, and Ethical Issues and Normative Perspectives
- Completing a “capstone” experience, such as a senior thesis, distinction project, recital, or juried exhibition
- Doing an internship, field placement, or practicum
- Collaborating on a research project through the Center for Interdisciplinary Research
- Choosing an interdisciplinary or self-designed major or concentration
- Working for an office that frequently solves problems, such as Information Technology or Residence Life
- Applying for an entrepreneurial grant, research scholarship, or innovation internship]

***Responsible interpersonal, civic, and global engagement* – Students will develop knowledge, skills, and commitments for enhancing the well-being of peers, families, and communities.**

For example, students will be able to:

- Live and work effectively with many different kinds of people
- Participate responsibly and knowledgeably in public life
- Understand, learn from, and respect differences
- Make decisions that reflect awareness of global interdependence
- Understand how faith shapes and informs values, relationships, and decisions
- Recognize and confront injustice and oppression
- Show respect for all callings
- Practice local stewardship and responsible use of resources

Students can develop these abilities through experiences such as:

- Completing General Education courses in Foreign Language, Studies in Human Behavior, and Multicultural Studies
- Studying abroad
- Serving as a Senator in the Student Government Association
- Engaging artistic works by diverse composers, authors, playwrights, dancers, and visual artists
- Participating in programs offered by Multicultural Affairs or International Student Life
- Majoring in a field such as Environmental Studies, Asian Studies, Religion, or Economics
- Mentoring middle school or high school students through Upward Bound or Educational Talent Search
- Working for Bon Appetit, volunteering with STOGrow, or working on the grounds crew

Informed vocational discernment and resourceful planning – Students will develop their gifts in pursuit of lives of worth and service.

For example, students will be able to:

- Use a wide variety of resources – both informational and interpersonal – to establish goals, make plans, and evaluate progress
- Articulate the ways in which their liberal arts education will enrich their professional and personal lives after graduation
- Understand vocation as both informing and reaching beyond their career choices
- Develop a vocational vision that embraces their distinctive gifts, their understanding of God's call, and the common good
- Continue learning throughout their lives

Students can develop these abilities through experiences such as:

- Attending talks on campus by professionals working in many different fields
- Taking part in the sophomore Quo Vadis retreat
- Pursuing student employment in an area they are considering as a possible career direction
- Using course writing or speaking assignments as opportunities to reflect on vocation
- Participating in Piper Center programs and services throughout their college experience
- Enrolling in a course that examines unfamiliar topics or fields of study
- Talking with faculty and staff, friends, and family about their gifts and goals

Text of each goal statement and examples of specific abilities associated with each goal approved by the St. Olaf faculty on March 7, 2013