

Institutional Learning Outcomes
Bachelor's Degree
May 2014

This document describes what students—regardless of major field or comprehensive, alternative program of study— should be expected to know and be able to do when they earn their bachelor's degree at Saint Mary's College of California. The achievement of these learning outcomes are specific to the mission of Saint Mary's College of California and generally consistent with national standards for bachelor's level education in the United States. These learning outcomes are designed to prepare students for excellence in graduate study and in their disciplinary specialties, for professional opportunities, for citizenship in our global society, and for a meaningful life characterized by lifelong learning and respect for the dignity of others.

Saint Mary's College of California offers the bachelor of arts or the bachelor of science degree in approximately fifty majors, and the Bachelor of Arts in the Integral Curriculum of Liberal Arts. The bachelor's degree is organized around robust student outcomes driven by core curricula, by major and minor curricula normed to those of disciplinary peers, and by developmental and sequential requirements in core, major, and comprehensive alternative curricula, intended to ensure that students deepen and broaden their knowledge and abilities throughout their college experience.

Learning Outcomes Part 1 - The Core Curriculum

HABITS OF MIND

A primary goal of the core curriculum is that students think deliberately and express themselves in a coherent and persuasive manner. In developing these habits, students gain proficiency in explaining, justifying and modifying their ideas, and they gain the ability to reflect critically on their assumptions. The habits are ways in which students approach areas of knowledge and methods of inquiry. Considered fundamental to a liberal education, habits of mind foster each student's development as one who seeks to know the truth and is preparing for a lifelong pursuit of knowledge.

Four-year students will meet the learning goals in this category through their four-course sequence in Collegiate Seminar, and three-course sequence in writing (English 4, English 5, and upper division writing).

Critical Thinking (a Habit of Mind)

Learning Goal: Critical thinking includes the processes of analysis, synthesis and evaluation necessary to understand and acquire knowledge. In addition to the application of formal logic, critical thinking also incorporates careful observation, reflection and experience. Critical thinking is not only applied in investigations intended to result in a

single, unambiguous conclusion, but also includes skills that allow for sound judgments to be made when multiple, competing viewpoints are possible. Throughout the core curriculum, students will practice the habits of critical thinking and move forward in their ability (and perhaps willingness) to question their assumptions. In short, students will be able to recognize, formulate and pursue meaningful questions about their own and others' ideas.

Learning Outcomes: With increasing proficiency, students will:

- Identify and understand assumptions and theses that exist in the work of others;
- Ask meaningful questions, originate plausible theses, and identify their own underlying assumptions;
- Seek and identify confirming and opposing evidence relevant to original and existing theses;
- Evaluate and synthesize evidence for the purpose of drawing valid conclusions.

Shared Inquiry (a Habit of Mind)

Learning Goal: Shared inquiry is the act of reasoning together about common texts, questions, and problems. It is a goal of the core curriculum to advance students' abilities to develop and pursue meaningful questions in collaboration with others. Through the habits of shared inquiry students will be able to carefully consider and understand the perspectives and reasoned opinions of others, reconsider their own personal opinion, and develop rhetorical skills.

Learning Outcomes: With increasing proficiency, students will:

- Advance probing questions about a common text or other object of study;
- Collaborate in sustained lines of inquiry;
- Reexamine judgments in light of evidence and collaborative discussion;
- Engage in inclusive, respectful conversation with others.

Written and Oral Communication (a Habit of Mind)

Learning Goal: A goal of the core curriculum is the development of strong written and oral communication skills. A mind is not truly liberated until it can effectively communicate what it knows. Students will develop communication skills that reflect an understanding of the power of language to shape thought and experience. They will learn to write and speak logically, with clarity, and with originality.

Learning Outcomes: With increasing proficiency, students will:

- Recognize and compose readable prose, as characterized by clear and careful organization, coherent paragraphs and well-constructed sentences that employ the conventions of Standard Written English and appropriate diction;
- Recognize and formulate effective written and oral communication, giving appropriate consideration to audience, context and format;
- Analyze arguments so as to construct ones that are well supported, are well reasoned, and are controlled by a thesis or exploratory question;

- Use the process of writing to enhance intellectual discovery and unravel complexities of thought.

Information Evaluation and Research Practices (Habits of Mind)

Learning Goal: Through the core curriculum, students will gain an understanding of the standards by which information is evaluated in society. Students will learn to judge the authenticity, validity, reliability, and originality of the sources of information they use. They will be able to do the research necessary to weigh evidence objectively in traditional and electronic formats.

Learning Outcomes: With increasing proficiency, students will:

- Develop search strategies and use library catalogs and databases to find relevant material;
- Critically evaluate sources;
- Integrate and cite evidence appropriately.
- Understand the concept of intellectual property and practice academic honesty.

PATHWAYS TO KNOWLEDGE

The goals listed in this section are grouped into four categories: Mathematical and Scientific Understanding, Artistic Understanding, Theological Understanding, and Social, Historical, and Cultural Understanding. While each category has its particular methodology and subject matter, taken together these pathways to knowledge provide the student with a cross-disciplinary approach to learning.

Mathematical and Scientific Understanding (Pathways to Knowledge)

Learning Goal: Mathematics and science courses that are part of the core curriculum will develop quantitative, observational, and problem solving abilities of students. In addition to gaining an understanding of content and methodologies, students will examine mathematics and science as a creative endeavor. They will also consider the social and ethical issues of scientific inquiry and application.

Mathematics Learning Outcomes: Students will:

- Apply abstract and logical reasoning to identify patterns and solve mathematical problems;
- Communicate mathematical ideas and concepts accurately and clearly using mathematical symbols, language, and formulas.

Scientific Learning Outcomes: Students will:

- Demonstrate an understanding of scientific concepts, principles, and theories that explain the natural and physical world;
- Collect, analyze, and interpret empirical data gathered in a laboratory or field setting;

- Examine social or ethical issues that arise in the process of scientific inquiry or out of scientific or technological developments.

Artistic Understanding (a Pathway to Knowledge)

Learning Goal: In the core curriculum, students will analyze, interpret and critique works of art, considering the role of formal methods and techniques, and historical contexts. In addition to intellectual engagement with the arts, students will also creatively engage with the arts through practice.

Learning Outcomes: Students will:

- Analyze and interpret the form and meaning of works of art by applying discipline-based critical vocabulary and theory to explore the work's significance within appropriate contexts (e.g., historical, cultural, aesthetic);
- In addition, students will
- Participate actively in a creative process using practices and materials specific to an artistic medium in order to produce an object or event appropriate to the discipline.

Theological Understanding (a Pathway to Knowledge)

Learning Goal: Through the study of religious texts, traditions, rituals, history, and human experience, students will engage in an academic exploration of religion and theology. They will join in an exploration of God, humankind, and the world as expressed in the Catholic and other religious traditions. Students will appreciate the social, cultural, ethical, and theological implications that such questions have for how we should live both individually and as a community.

Christian Foundations Learning Outcomes: Students will:

- Demonstrate knowledge of major texts and themes of the Bible, including major theological and interpretive principles central to the Catholic tradition
- – with attention to their social, cultural, ethical and/or theological implications; and
- Demonstrate an understanding of basic methods and tools used in scholarly interpretation of biblical texts; and
- Demonstrate an ability to read biblical texts in light of relevant contextual factors (e.g., historical, cultural, literary, theological).

Theological Explorations: Students will

- Demonstrate an understanding of one or more aspects of Christian tradition and/or another religious tradition or traditions, acquired through focused study in a sub-field of theology or religious studies; and
- Demonstrate an ability to explore religious questions from a believer's point of reference and from the critical perspective of the academy.

Social, Historical, and Cultural Understanding (Pathways to Knowledge)

Learning Goal: By studying the world from the perspectives and frameworks of history and the social sciences, students will understand how to place today's world in a meaningful context and to arrive at sufficiently complex explanations for current social arrangements. These perspectives and their methodologies allow students to probe deeply into the richness and diversity of what it has meant and means to be a human in relationship with others, in different places and times.

Learning Outcomes: Students will:

- Examine human activity in particular periods or places from a social, cultural or historical perspective;
- Demonstrate an understanding of theories of human behavior, relations, culture, or institutions; or interpretations of historical causation and change;
- Employ social science or historical methodology to collect and interpret evidence about the social world.

ENGAGING THE WORLD

In addition to developing habits of mind and pursuing pathways to knowledge, the core curriculum requires students to examine and reflect on what it means to be a citizen in a local community and as part of the global community. To achieve these goals, students will use the habits of critical thought and shared inquiry to explore justice, civic responsibility, and social, economic, and cultural differences. Students will also move out of the traditional classroom to learn from experience and to apply the knowledge they have acquired in the classroom.

The Common Good (Engaging the World)

Learning Goal: The core curriculum is one of the key vehicles for living out the College's Catholic and Lasallian traditions, which asks student to explore the meaning of the common good. This goal encourages vigorous academic debate about different ideas of what the common good is and how it might be pursued.

Learning Outcomes: Students will complete *two* of the following outcomes:

- Reflect and write substantively on ways in which human beings find fulfillment in community; or
- Articulate, in prose or through another communicative medium, a critical account of just social order; or
- Demonstrate a capacity for coherent, principled analysis of concrete social problems.

American Diversity (Engaging the World)

Learning Goal: The dignity of the human person is a foundational belief of the Catholic faith. We live, study, and work in an increasingly diverse American society. Therefore, in the core curriculum students will be asked to intellectually engage with social, cultural, economic, and political diversity in the United States. They will understand what it means to be civically engaged in diverse communities and to work cooperatively in diverse workplaces.

Learning Outcomes: Students will:

- Analyze aspects of social diversity (e.g., ethnicity, race, socio-economic status, gender, sexual orientation, religion, age, ability, and political identity) and how they affect society in the United States of America;
- Explain how social categories and structures of power may affect the human person.

Global Perspective (Engaging the World)

Learning Goal: In today's interdependent world, college graduates need to work with people and communities from across the globe. This work will depend upon many factors, not the least of which is the understanding of a foreign language. Through the core curriculum, students will study and compare the social, economic, religious, and political structures of different global communities and cultures, and gain an understanding of the interdependence of these communities.

Learning Outcomes: Students will:

- Analyze the process of globalization by using different theoretical perspectives and debates on a broad range of issues (including issues of dependence and interdependence); or
- Demonstrate an understanding of the world from a specific non-U.S. and non-Western European viewpoint.

Community Engagement (Engaging the World)

Learning Goal: The core curriculum gives students an engaging, intellectual experience. The Community Engagement goal also requires them to leave the classroom and engage with the world - to apply their intellectual experiences to communities beyond the academy. Students will actively and critically reflect upon these experiences and integrate them in their academic understanding of the world.

Learning Outcomes: Students will:

- Apply academic methods and/or theories in a way that promotes collaboration and mutual benefit in a community setting;
- Demonstrate critical reflection throughout their experience;
- Express their understanding of the interconnections between their experience and their responsibilities as members of social or professional communities.

Learning Outcomes Part 2 – Disciplinary Expertise

Students receiving the bachelor's degree at Saint Mary's must demonstrate specialized knowledge in a given discipline or interdisciplinary field. This specialized learning should be aligned with learning accomplished through the completion of Core Curriculum requirements. Each discipline or field defines specific requirements and maintains specific learning outcomes for the major. All students will be able to:

- Define and explain the boundaries of the discipline/field.
- Understand and demonstrate the use of specialized terms and methodologies common to the discipline/field.
- Evaluate and respond to a complex question or challenge in the discipline/field in a manner that demonstrates the integration of theory, methodology, textual analysis, and/or empirical evidence.