

## Principles of General Education at Pacific Lutheran University

The university's mission is to "educate students for lives of thoughtful inquiry, leadership, service, and care—for other people, for their communities, and for the earth." Emerging from the university's Lutheran heritage, our mission emphasizes both freedom of inquiry and a life engaged in the world. Our location in the Pacific Northwest, and our commitment to educate students for the complexities of life in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, also shape the university's educational identity.

The university aims to produce global citizens, future leaders, and whole, richly-informed persons. At the heart of the university is the general education curriculum. Through this program of study, students begin the process of shaping not only a career, but more importantly a life of meaning and purpose. This general education, in which students grapple with life's most fundamental questions, is deepened and complemented by the specialized work students undertake in their majors. An education is a process, and the following three components that inform the general university requirements are not discrete, but interconnected and mutually supportive.

*Values:* The university sustains the Lutheran commitment to the life of the mind, to engagement and service in the world, and to nurturing the development of whole persons—in body, mind, and spirit. As described in the university's long-range plan *PLU 2010*, these values are fundamental, and they are inseparable from each other. As important, PLU offers an education not only in values, but in valuing. Pacific Lutheran University helps students thoughtfully shape their values and choices, realizing that imagination and decision give to a human life its unique trajectory and purpose, and always understanding that life gains meaning when dedicated to a good larger than oneself. Located in the Pacific Northwest and on the Pacific Rim, the university is well-situated to address global issues, social diversity and justice, and care for the earth.

*Knowledge:* An education at Pacific Lutheran University makes students the center of their own education. The best education understands knowledge as saturated with value and meaning, as much produced as acquired. It is a communal undertaking, involving both knower and context. We understand academic disciplines, as well as multi-disciplinary fields of inquiry, as ways of knowing. They do more than organize knowledge. They define the questions, methods, and modes of discourse by which knowledge is produced. Students are required to study across a range of these disciplines to gain an understanding of the ways in which educated people understand themselves and the world.

*Skills and Abilities:* As described by the university's Integrative Learning Objectives, skills and abilities that characterize an education at Pacific Lutheran University are essential for the cultivation of the potentials of mind, heart, and hand. They are inseparable from what it means to know and to value. They include the ability to express oneself effectively and creatively, to think critically, to discern and formulate values, to interact with others, and to understand the world from various perspectives.

A general education at Pacific Lutheran University affirms the relationships among rigorous academic inquiry, human flourishing in a diverse world, and a healthy environment. Such an education requires first and foremost a faculty of exceptional scholar-teachers, committed to educating the whole student, and understanding that learning is active, engaged, and in the best sense transformative.