

Undergraduate Education and Student Life

REVITALIZING THE UNDERGRADUATE EXPERIENCE

Stanford is committed to providing an undergraduate experience that helps students from all backgrounds thrive academically, personally, and socially. Programs designed to take learning beyond the traditional classroom setting are helping undergraduates to gain the skills and perspectives they will need to become leaders in their careers, their communities, and in the world.



PREPARING STUDENTS TO THRIVE IN A GLOBAL COMMUNITY

About undergraduate education and student life at Stanford

At its best, college is a time of both intellectual and personal growth. It is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity for students to broaden their horizons, make lifelong connections, and discover new ways to become engaged members of society. As a residential university, Stanford offers undergraduates unique opportunities to live and learn with people different from themselves and to see the value of diverse perspectives. Below are just a few of the ways we are striving to help students access the full richness of a Stanford education inside and beyond the classroom.

Leland Scholars Program *Leveling the learning landscape*

Our talented undergraduates arrive on campus with a variety of backgrounds and educational experiences. This can mean that students need different levels of support to succeed academically at the university level. The Leland Scholars Program (LSP) is one way that Stanford is leveling the playing field. Before the start of the school year, LSP offers a four-week introduction to Stanford's undergraduate curriculum for frosh who are from low-income backgrounds, attended under-resourced high schools, or may be the first in their families to go to college. LSP also provides seminars, advising sessions, and a sense of community throughout participants' Stanford journeys. Demand for this program continues to exceed available spots. Additional funding would allow us to expand LSP to accommodate all applicants who qualify.

FINDING FAMILY ON THE FARM

For George Birikorang, '25, who came to Stanford from Takoradi, Ghana, LSP helped ease the transition to life on an American university campus. "LSP gave me the exposure I needed to reduce the cultural shocks in the United States even before school began," he says. "It taught me the relevance of social life and community at Stanford and gave me a strong family I could count on." Birikorang says that LSP also connected him with the university's mental and physical well-being resources, setting him up for success for the rest of his undergraduate journey and beyond. "I exited my freshman year with a whole new perspective about life," says Birikorang. "Life is much more than just solving problem sets, showing up to classes, or cramming all night; it's also about taking care of yourself."



COLLEGE *Laying a foundation for exploration and inquiry*

Regardless of the career paths they choose, students must be able to build meaningful connections with people from different walks of life and practice critical thinking, active listening, and the respectful exchange of ideas. Stanford's new first-year curriculum, COLLEGE (Civic, Liberal, and Global Education), encourages all frosh students to think broadly and deeply about the purpose of a college education and their rights and responsibilities as citizens. Through courses centered on three topics—liberal education, civic engagement, and global perspectives—the program strives to provide a shared first-year learning experience and opportunities for frosh to discuss complex, often contentious issues in a way that is substantive and civil. Instead of the traditional lecture style, the majority of the required three-quarter sequence of classes, close to 100 of them, will be taught in small seminars of 15 students, creating an environment that fosters regular interaction between frosh and their instructors. Securing the resources necessary to support this number of COLLEGE classes is an ongoing priority.

QUESTIONING THE NARRATIVE

In order to fulfill her COLLEGE requirement, Eden Hadar, '27, took *Living with Viruses*, one of the courses offered under the global perspectives element of the program. The course broadened her horizons as classmates shared their experiences with COVID-19 restrictions—many of which differed greatly from her own experience in Israel, where she lived from ages 12 to 18. “We all have firsthand narratives,” Hadar says. “I want to learn more about people and their unique story.” In Hadar's final project for the class, she and her group looked at the case of Janet Parker, the last known person to die of smallpox in 1978. They used this story—of a medical photographer who likely contracted the disease at work—as a way to examine how pathogens are stored and studied. “The way you tell the narrative can significantly change the story,” she says. “Even though the facts might be the same, picking and choosing information can really shape how you view the science.”

Bing Overseas Studies Program

Embracing growth in a global setting

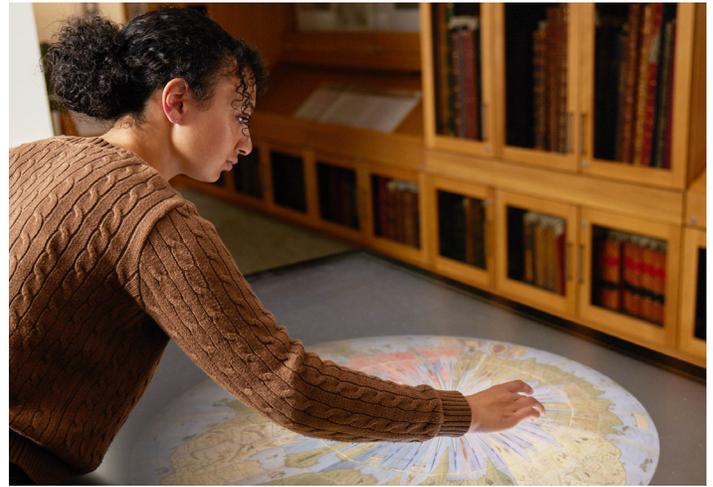
If we want our students to become thriving global citizens, there is perhaps no better learning opportunity for them than the Bing Overseas Studies Program (BOSP), whose offerings include quarter-long study away programs, two- to four-week global seminars, and a variety of internship and fieldwork experiences. Approximately 50 percent of each graduating class participates in a BOSP program during their time at Stanford, enjoying learning experiences that nurture their academic, personal, and professional growth. Many participants state that studying away was an unforgettable highlight of their Stanford education. Support from donors helps keep BOSP opportunities accessible to students from all backgrounds.

A PERSONAL RENAISSANCE

“I can confidently affirm that this decision was one of the most rewarding choices I’ve made in my academic journey,” says Alexandra Torres Arsuaga, ’25. Arsuaga attended the BOSP Florence Program following a year of Italian language classes, which made her eager to learn more about Italian language and culture. The psychology major was surprised to see how the experience enriched her coursework in other disciplines as well. “Delving into Italian film, gender and race studies, and art and culture, I found striking connections and applicability to my feminist gender and sexuality studies minor,” she says. “The quarter spent in Florence was an immersive experience, guiding me toward personal growth and an expanded global perspective.”

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—Alexandra Torres Arsuaga, ’25



Research *Creating knowledge through investigation and discovery*

Stanford's undergraduate curriculum encourages students to pursue knowledge broadly before selecting an area of focus where they investigate questions, draw their own conclusions, and become creators of knowledge. Each year, more than 1,000 undergraduates engage deeply with a subject of their choosing through research with support from individual grants and departmental resources. This transformative experience allows students to connect their classroom learning and intellectual interests as they work on an independent project under faculty mentorship.

A LEARNER'S PARADISE

Human biology major Sophia Longo, '24, aspires to become a physician-scientist specializing in oncology and cancer biology. As an undergraduate, she served as a researcher at the Khavari Laboratory in the School of Medicine, a lab that studies genome regulation in stem cell differentiation and cancer and seeks to develop new molecular therapeutics for human diseases. Longo's honors thesis research—which received a Firestone Medal for Excellence in Undergraduate Research and will fulfill her capstone requirement—examines how mutations in certain cancer cell populations suppress the mechanism that typically alerts the immune system to their presence, allowing tumors to continue to grow.

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—Sophia Longo, '24

“Our hope is that this will benefit our ability to act on precision medicine initiatives,” she says. “My dream is to go from bedside to lab bench and back. I want to leverage inspiration from both sides to not only create good in somebody's life as a physician, but lasting good for more generations to come as a researcher.” Longo is also pursuing a coterminal degree in biomedical data science through the medical school. “Where else on Earth could I get an undergrad degree in human biology, go on to a grad program, and do meaningful research, all in the same space and at the same time? It's a learner's paradise,” she says.

Capstones

The implementation of the capstone requirement for every undergraduate beginning with the Class of 2025 has contributed to a growing demand for research opportunities and resources. Capstone projects synthesize learning from a student's major, and an increasing number of undergraduates are choosing to conduct research as part of their capstone experience. Students undertake these high-impact educational projects—ranging from honors theses to e-portfolios—with close guidance from faculty, giving them the opportunity to develop a deep relationship with at least one mentor. The university is committed to making additional investments in research as student interest continues to grow.

ENGINEERING EFFICIENCY

Biomechanical engineering major Adam Benmira, '24, completed *Stanford Mechanical Engineering Capstone*, a two-quarter course with an accompanying group project. Partnering with Kyaro Assistive Tech, a company dedicated to making “appropriate assistive technology accessible in East Africa,” Benmira's team helped to standardize and streamline Kyaro's wheelchair production process, cutting production time by almost 20 percent.

“The capstone project helped to cement what I've learned in my major through real-world applications,” says Benmira. He also cites the role that his instructors played throughout the experience. “[They] were really great at guiding, without prescribing, our work,” he says.

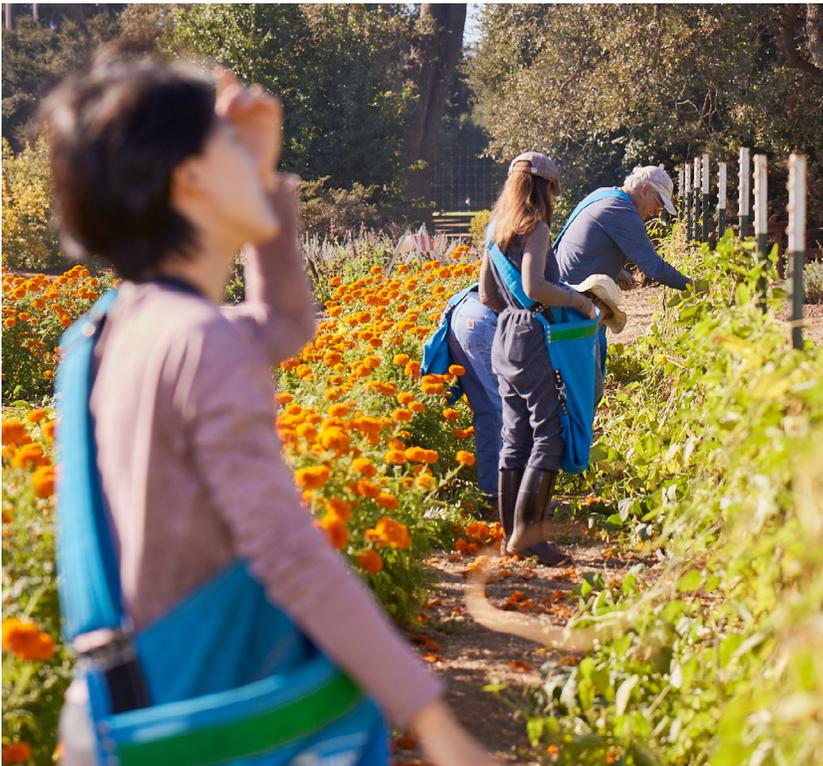
Well-Being at Stanford *Empowering students to flourish*

We want every student to have the internal and external resources to enjoy a healthy, vibrant life at Stanford—and beyond. The Well-Being at Stanford program provides access to certified well-being coaches who can help students learn skills for managing stress, building resilience, and forming connections with others. Based on their individual needs, students may pursue well-being coaching in concert with clinical and mental health services, many of which are available through Counseling and Psychological Services.

REDEFINING SUCCESS AND IMPACT

Maija Cruz, '12, is one of Well-Being at Stanford's seven coaches and supports students connected to the university's community centers and ethnic theme houses. "When we talk about student well-being, we're talking about what a person needs to have a sustainable experience on campus and beyond," she says. Cruz and her colleagues provide coaching for undergraduate and graduate students, with coach availability barely able to meet increasing demand.

"We want to ensure that students don't automatically think that making an impact and being resilient means subscribing to grind culture at the expense of their own mental health and well-being," she says. "For too long, higher education has taken a reactive approach with mental health and well-being. As coaches, we're a trusted, non-punitive adult in students' lives. We can make asking for help a safer, more familiar, and friendlier process so that students will reach out earlier on—before there's a crisis."



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IT TAKES ALL OF US, INCLUDING YOU.

As a university, it is our responsibility and privilege to prepare students to meet the challenges of and opportunities in an increasingly global society, and we cannot do this alone.

Together, the Stanford community can help ensure that the undergraduate experience fosters the self-discovery, academic exploration, and deep and meaningful relationships that will shape the next generation of changemakers. Please join us.

Learn more about undergraduate education and student life here:
giving.stanford.edu/undergrad-initiatives

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