

Stanford

# STANFORD'S NEW FIRST-YEAR CURRICULUM

COLLEGE (Civic, Liberal, and Global Education)

*Priority Paper*







## COLLEGE: A NEW FIRST-YEAR CURRICULUM

# ABOUT COLLEGE

## Laying a foundation for exploration and inquiry

Today's students face a rapidly changing world. Climate change, economic inequality, and political polarization are among the issues that they must confront as they go out into the world, build their lives, and strive to have a positive impact. In this context, an undergraduate education should do more than equip students with specialized knowledge and skills: It should also empower them to navigate these complexities, engage with their communities, and apply what they've learned to create a more just and sustainable world.

The diversity of Stanford's student body—which is greater than ever—helps prepare students for these realities. But diversity is just the beginning. Almost all Stanford undergrads live on campus, which is unusual at a major research university and gives students opportunities to build community outside the classroom and learn from one another. By ensuring the undergraduate experience includes both a basic liberal arts foundation and opportunities for students to build meaningful connections across racial, socioeconomic, geographical, and political lines, we allow students to access the full richness that a Stanford education has to offer. And by providing a supportive environment that encourages intellectual curiosity, we help students become resilient, thriving citizens and scholars.



# LIBERAL EDUCATION, CITIZENSHIP, AND GLOBAL PERSPECTIVES



One of the key programs advancing these goals is COLLEGE (Civic, Liberal, and Global Education), a new first-year curriculum that enables undergraduate students to:

- Benefit from a shared intellectual experience that extends outside the classroom
- Reflect on what it means to be citizens and engage in debate more deeply and openly
- Consider their impact on others and develop a framework for ethical reasoning
- Define their own success as interconnected with the success of others

Stanford created COLLEGE after a university report confirmed that many undergraduates' focus on their future careers was keeping them from exploring courses, including those in the liberal arts, that invite discussion about meaningful aspects of life and contribute to a well-rounded education. There was also concern that some students were not learning the skills necessary to navigate today's civic and political challenges. The program launched in autumn 2021 as a new first-year requirement for undergraduates.

Within the program, students may choose from classes centered on three topics: *liberal education*, *citizenship*, and *global perspectives*. Faculty from across the university teach COLLEGE courses, with the goal of encouraging all first-year students to think broadly and deeply about the purpose of a college education, and their rights and responsibilities as local and global citizens. By learning and engaging in serious, respectful dialogue about topics from climate change to human rights, students develop the skills to wrestle with complex, even controversial issues, in a way that fosters community and civility on campus and beyond.

**“I love having conversations and seeing people’s rationale and thought processes—that was something that COLLEGE allowed me to do. When people bring different perspectives to the discussion, you really ask yourself, ‘What do I believe?’”**

—Eden Hadar, '27



# A PERSONAL AND SHARED EXPERIENCE

Given the breadth and depth of COLLEGE’s three key topics, a scaffolded, multiple-quarter approach is necessary to provide meaningful instruction. The Faculty Senate has approved legislation establishing a five-year implementation period for COLLEGE, during which students choose two courses in two separate quarters during the academic year. The senate will consider whether to mandate the full three-quarter requirement in 2025–26. In anticipation of this expansion, our goal is to increase the number of COLLEGE faculty and classes enough to implement the three-course requirement as originally intended.

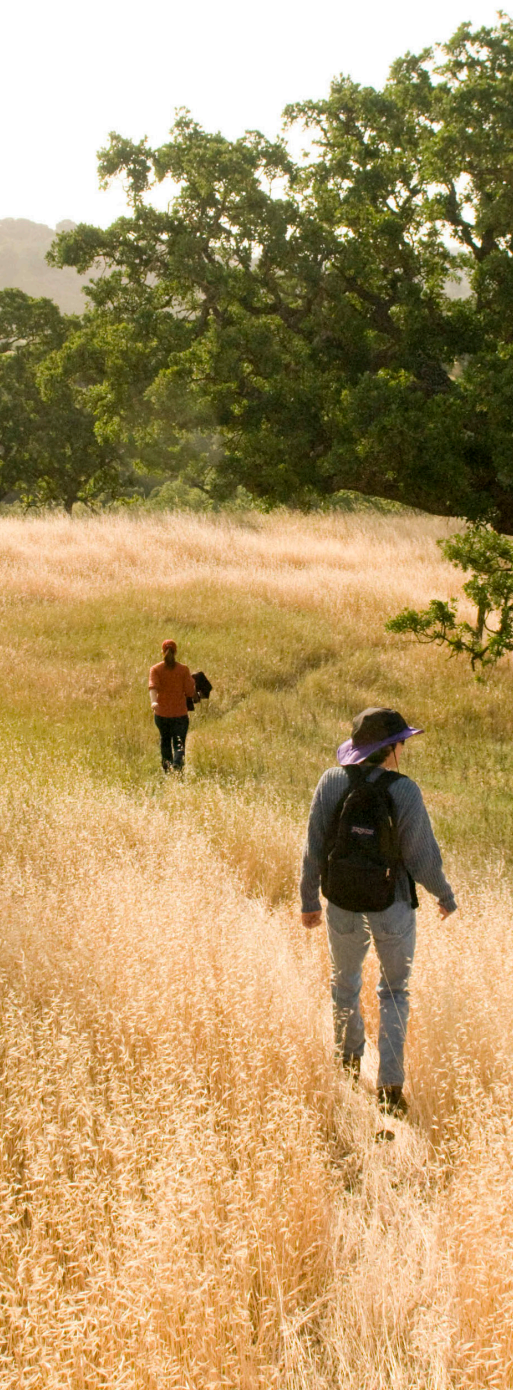
Fall and winter offerings emphasize discussion seminars over lecture courses. This interactive format enables students to practice how to pursue a liberal education in the company of other learners. Small seminar-style courses also allow closer relationships between instructors and students to develop organically, with students benefiting from the faculty’s breadth of disciplinary perspectives and skills. These relationships often serve as foundations for valuable faculty and student interaction beyond the classroom. In addition, as students begin to learn from one another in the classroom, they are able to break down the divide between living and learning when they return to their residences, building a stronger community with their peers.



► **Students would complete the full requirement during their first three quarters as follows:**

- ***Why College? Your Education and the Good Life***, the fall quarter requirement, introduces students to the idea of liberal education, explains its goals and history, and offers a rationale for broad learning in the service of life (not only a career).
- ***Citizenship in the 21st Century***, the winter quarter requirement, explores past, present, and future challenges for democratic societies, as well as broader issues related to what it means to be a citizen.
- ***Global Perspectives*** classes are offered in the spring and examine global phenomena that are shaping the world today, such as climate change, pandemics, human rights, energy production, war, and protest movements.

In this sequence, students begin by thinking introspectively about their own lives, progress to thinking about the role they play in their communities, and finally consider their impact on the world.



# MAKING YOUR IMPACT

Stanford must offer roughly 100 seminars per quarter to teach COLLEGE effectively. Through the Office of the Vice Provost for Undergraduate Education, Stanford has allocated \$2 million annually—equivalent to \$38 million in endowed funds—to hire the lecturers needed to expand COLLEGE from the previous one-quarter first-year requirement to the new two-quarter requirement.

Assuming the Faculty Senate approves the third quarter in FY26, as is hoped, the university will need to allocate an additional \$2 million per year to continue to offer these seminar-style courses that are proving to be so effective. To raise the endowment needed to ensure that these resources can continue, we have created a new gift opportunity that gives donors the chance to connect with faculty who are participating in the program.

## Endowed COLLEGE Faculty Fellowships

While the majority of the teaching in COLLEGE is done by full-time lecturers, we also depend on a growing number of faculty who provide leadership, curricular oversight, and various disciplinary perspectives for the program. When a faculty member volunteers to teach a COLLEGE course, they receive the honorific title of COLLEGE Faculty Fellow in appreciation of their commitment. To ensure that the program is funded in perpetuity, Stanford is hoping to raise 24 COLLEGE Faculty Fellowships at \$1 million each. These gifts will qualify for \$500,000 in matching funds from the university, creating a total of \$36 million in endowed funds.

In recognition of each \$1 million gift, Stanford will establish a COLLEGE Faculty Fellowship in perpetuity bearing the name of the donor or their designated honoree. The fellowship will be assigned to a faculty member within the COLLEGE program every quarter, with the possibility of the fellowship being assigned to as many as three faculty members in a given academic year (based on the number of quarters the faculty member teaches).





*To learn more, please contact:*

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