Oberlin’s Student Learning Goals:

Oberlin College seeks to cultivate in our students the knowledge, skills, and dispositions that will guide and motivate them at school and throughout their lives. Deeply committed to academic excellence, the College of Arts and Sciences offers a rich and balanced curriculum in the humanities, creative arts, social sciences, natural sciences, and mathematics. Within that framework the College expects that students will work closely with members of the faculty, advisors, and the instructional staff to design an educational program appropriate to their specific interests, needs, and long-term goals.

Students who attend Oberlin:

1. Will deepen their understanding of specific fields while building their capacity to create new knowledge, approaches or creative work in those areas. We value depth because it allows students to acquire substantial knowledge in a chosen field. Depth in a field enables students to understand its logic and epistemology, assumptions and methodologies. A deeper understanding of a specific field of study generates the potential for students to move beyond the skills of analyzing and evaluating information and towards the creation of new knowledge or approaches, or the production of original work.

2. Will broaden their knowledge of and appreciation for the variety of ways, including but not limited to the scientific, humanistic, aesthetic, and behavioral, that knowledge is and has been, constructed. To be liberally educated is to be acquainted with a wide variety of ways that humans have asked and answered questions in the past and the present, within the traditions of western culture as well as other cultural frameworks and ways of knowing. Learning across established fields of study, both within disciplines and in interdisciplinary approaches, cultivates in students a concrete appreciation for different ways of constructing knowledge and different modes of discernment with which one should be familiar. To engage deeply and reflectively with the past is to come to terms with different ways of thinking and being in the world. By introducing students to different intellectual and creative approaches to the production of knowledge and cultivation of insight, we help them better appreciate that deeper understandings often draw on a variety of approaches and traditions.

3. Will analyze arguments on the basis of evidence and an understanding of the context in which evidence is produced. We will help our students become engaged participants in, not just consumers of, their education; we are committed to enabling our students to learn how to learn. We want our students to be active listeners, insightful questioners and informed producers of knowledge. Our central tools are those of critical analysis, an understanding that assumptions, approaches and conclusions, including one’s own, must always be tested, and that claims are to be examined in light of a variety of forms of evidence. To engage in critical analysis is to be aware of the social, political, cultural, historical, and scientific contexts that have shaped the development of knowledge and, therefore, to be humble in face of its limits. To become skilled at critical analysis, one must develop a number of different capacities, specifically the ability to conceptualize, apply, analyze, synthesize, and evaluate information.

4. Should understand, appreciate and participate in the creative process. We widely recognize creativity as a central component in the arts, and have long valued the imaginative talents of our students. Creativity is also a cognitive process that underlies the work of our students across many fields and endeavors. To be innovative is to combine the knowledge and skills one has gained to
form a novel, coherent whole, to fashion something original. It involves the capacity to generate new ideas, approaches, or hypotheses, the skills involved in planning, and the determination and resources needed to bring an idea to life: in the concert hall and the classroom, on stage, the athletic fields, and in the laboratory, in the community and with the community.

5. **Should be able to communicate with diverse audiences, employing a variety of approaches, media, and languages.** An Oberlin education should provide students with the ability to communicate articulately, persuasively, dispassionately, and, when required, passionately, in written as well as oral modes, by listening as well as talking, with both specialized and lay audiences. Oberlin helps students to develop the skills and cultural competence needed to interact effectively in languages other than English. Further, as the ability to communicate beyond written and oral forms increases, it will become ever more important for Oberlin to help its students develop their capacity to communicate through a variety of means, including visual, quantitative, and digital.

6. **Should develop a critical understanding of the historical and cultural factors that underlie difference and inequality in U.S. and global societies.** Oberlin has a specific responsibility not only to create a diverse community of students, but also to place our students in the epistemological, curricular, and pedagogical frameworks where they can learn to interact across difference. We value this highly not just because of Oberlin’s unique history in terms of the early role it played in the education of African Americans and women, but because truly engaged learning requires the presence of diverse learning communities and the reduction of barriers to inclusion at every level. And this, in turn, requires providing the resources needed to support diversity and to help the entire Oberlin community understand how inequality has been generated, shaped, and or challenged both in the past and at the present time.

7. **Should collaborate to solve problems, generate fresh questions, create new knowledge and advance community goals.** The ability to engage effectively with others is an important problem-solving and life skill. By working closely and productively with others, our students will be better positioned to understand and address complex problems from a variety of perspectives. Developing the practice of successful collaboration also entails a high degree of self-awareness and an understanding of the relationship between individual initiative and the potential of working with others. Finally, collaborative efforts should increase one's openness to working not just across disciplinary approaches, but also alongside those with whom one may disagree.

8. **Should develop an enduring commitment to acting in the world to further social justice, deepen democracy, and build a sustainable future.** Oberlin’s long history of challenging some of this country’s gravest inequities underlines the responsibility our alumni feel to acting beyond narrow self-interest. Oberlin students believe that one person can make a difference, and that many people, working together and using a wide range of skills, can create local and global communities that are more just, equitable, democratic, peaceful, and sustainable. These are lifelong ethical commitments, nurtured through diverse social networks, including Oberlin’s distinguished alumni, and pursued via a wide range of careers pathways and social commitments.

9. **Should cultivate those habits that support healthy and sustainable living, responsible and empathetic interactions with others, and a capacity for self-reflection and contemplation.** It is of utmost importance that our students leave Oberlin with the knowledge and skills they will need for their careers and future well being. But we are well aware that other factors can equally influence these outcomes. It is therefore essential that our students develop the ability to reflect on and take ownership over their learning, a capacity for resilience, a knowledge of the importance of
taking appropriate risks and the ability to rebound from setbacks, a strong ethical and moral grounding, a capacious curiosity, a broad capacity for empathetic engagement, an awareness of their own physical and mental well-being, and an understanding of the importance of being responsible in the world, along with the humility to recognize their own limitations.