

# Intellectual Foundations

## The Mission and Principles of Intellectual Foundations

The Intellectual Foundations Program promotes an understanding of the continuity of human history, the depth of inherited knowledge, the validity of diverse modes of inquiry, the value of artistic expression and the richness of our collective experience.

The purpose of the Intellectual Foundations Program is to develop the skills and habits of the mind required for a life of intellectual curiosity and civic engagement.

## Guiding Principles

- A well-educated person understands that s/he lives in history. S/he understands that it is the key to who we are today and where we are going tomorrow. S/he recognizes the profound ways in which our own experience is crucially conditioned by that of others.
- A well-educated person understands that there are many ways of viewing and understanding the world and recognizes and appreciates both difference and similarity. S/he is literate across a wide range of genres and media and can find, in radically different forms of discourse, crucial and equally valuable insights and meaning. For an educated person, all are special forms of "reading," profound ways in which the eyes and the ears, and the other senses become attuned to the infinite wonders and talents that make up the human and the natural world.
- A well-educated person knows how to listen and to hear; to watch and observe. S/he can follow an argument, track logical reasoning, detect illogic; hear the emotions that lie behind both the logic and the illogic, and ultimately empathize with the person who is feeling those emotions. S/he recognizes that insights are to be gained from people with a variety of backgrounds and values and uses them in a constant dialogue between knowledge and values.
- A well-educated person can communicate effectively. S/he knows how to present information, to ask thoughtful questions and to converse with people of different backgrounds. S/he practices respect and humility, tolerance and self-criticism.
- A well-educated person can write clearly, persuasively and movingly. S/he is adept at the craft of using the written word to convey ideas, emotions, and accurate description. S/he approaches writing as a creative process of communication – of intellectual and civic engagement – as well as self-reflection.
- A well-educated person can solve a wide variety of problems. S/he knows how to look at a complex reality, break it into pieces, analyze and reconstruct it again. S/he understands that challenges present themselves in vastly differing and unexpected forms and contexts and must be addressed

using a variety of critical and creative methodologies, both qualitative and quantitative.

- Well-educated people jointly engage the world of ideas, of human affairs and of nature by integration and connection. They see connections so as to be able to make sense of the world and act within it in creative ways. They know that they belong to a community whose prosperity and well-being is crucial to their own and help that community flourish by giving of themselves to make the success of others possible. All of the qualities addressed above are in the end about gaining the power, the insight, the generosity, and finally the freedom and the wisdom to connect with one another and the world.

**Intellectual Foundations Page for New and transfer undergraduates entering SUNY Buffalo State during summer 2014 or fall 2014 and later -**

<http://intellectualfoundations.buffalostate.edu/if-2014-fall-2014>

**Intellectual Foundations Page for or undergraduate students entering SUNY Buffalo State, who began college as freshmen on or after fall 2006 to spring 2014 -**

<http://intellectualfoundations.buffalostate.edu/if-fall-2006-spring-2014>