

What Do We Want For Our Graduates?

Since the college exists for its students, a college's vision must embrace those individuals it seeks to educate. Thus, to aspire to be a college of excellence is to aspire to produce people of excellence, and to believe in the value of a Christian liberal arts education is to believe in the value of that education for its students. It is to believe in the significant role such an education can play in transforming lives and putting people on a trajectory that will yield, over time, a certain kind of person, characterized by a range of valuable knowledge, helpful skills and positive attitudes. Therefore, the hopes and aspirations of Westmont are hopes and aspirations for its graduates.

1. Graduates should possess interpersonal competence that enables them to listen respectfully, ask questions thoughtfully, self-disclose appropriately, give feedback honestly and sensitively, participate in dialogue, work with a group, and be characterized by tolerance and appreciation of differences.
2. Graduates should be learning to temper rigid beliefs, be open to alternative interpretations, weigh evidence fairly and, in general, function self-critically.
3. Graduates should be possessed of core convictions and commitments for which they claim ownership, which they can thoughtfully defend, and to which they can be true in a world of competing moral and spiritual visions.
4. Graduates of Westmont College should have a biblical and theological understanding and an appreciation of worship and spiritual formation that exceed what can be acquired at a secular university supplemented by campus Christian fellowships and active participation in a local church. They should have a vision of Christianity that is as large and developed as their disciplinary and professional sophistication.
5. Graduates should be on their way to formulating a web of knowledge from all sources integrated around the Christian understanding of God.
6. Graduates should be sensitive to the ever-present need for discernment in separating the core of the eternal gospel from the peculiar cultural accretions of a particular time and place. They should be vigilant in seeking to determine when the gospel would call us to be agents of transformation in the world and in the church, and when it would call us to be agents of preservation.
7. Graduates should possess the resources and skills necessary to handle tensions that arise between Christian faith and other seriously argued positions, to live confidently yet self-critically, in a world of competing ideologies. Their skills would include the ability to use scripture responsibly and intelligently.
8. Graduates should be characterized by fair-mindedness, openness to new ideas, a willingness to submit their ideas to criticism, and an appreciation of both the value and limitations of formal reasoning, a suspicion of manipulative rhetoric as a substitute for cogent argumentation, patience in staying with a difficult search for truth when it requires protracted reasoning and effort. These are intellectual virtues, but they are

also Christian virtues, and our graduates should see how they are grounded in the Christian vision of human existence.

9. Graduates should be so educated that they will bear a cultured and literate witness for the gospel, yet without arrogance or a sense of superiority. Thus, they will fill the need for educated individuals who can bear witness to the gospel by actively yet graciously carrying the righteousness and justice of God and the message of reconciliation into the larger community.
10. Graduates should be knowledgeable about the world in which God has placed them because appropriate moral action requires full and accurate information in addition to sound moral principles. Otherwise, ignorance will frustrate even our best efforts to do the right thing.
11. Graduates should be individuals who are characterized by broad and expansive sympathies. Their concerns should extend to the spiritually lost, to the homeless and hungry, to those suffering from racial and gender prejudice, to the destruction of our biotic, cultural, and sociopolitical environments, etc.
12. Graduates should evidence the habit of integrating their knowledge and sensitivities into real-life decisions that embody a willingness to relinquish power, prestige, security, and personal gratification, a willingness based on a growing faith in the providence and call of Christ in their lives.
13. Graduates should be able to locate themselves in history. They should understand the pivotal transition from a modern to a post-modern vision of the world that many see occurring at the present time, and understand the implications of this for an articulation and defense of the Christian faith.
14. Graduates should be equipped with the tools to continue learning throughout their lives, both because learning can become a source of lifelong satisfaction and because of the ever-changing nature of our world.
15. Graduates should be characterized by reading, entertainment, recreation/leisure, and consumer choices that reflect a sense of wonder, delight, and appreciation of the marvels of the natural world and the treasures of human culture. They should understand the meaning of high pleasure that simultaneously humbles and elevates the enjoyer.
16. Graduates should be developing a sense of Christian vocation that will inform career goals, marital choices, and other central lifestyle decisions, and that is based on a recognition of their own gifts, on their understanding of the world and the dilemmas it faces, and on their convictions about the values of the gospel and the present agenda of God in the world.
17. Graduates should have those writing, oral, and thinking skills necessary for career and vocational success, along with the ability to work cooperatively and effectively with others in both leadership and subordinate roles.
18. Graduates should have the skills, knowledge and motivation to be effective participants in the civic, charitable and cultural lives of their communities.

Recognizing that there is a wide variety of ways in which a Christian liberal arts education can be legitimately appropriated in an individual life, the college should accordingly expect, accommodate, and even encourage a range of intellectual and spiritual styles among its graduates. In fact, while we hope that Westmont alumni will exhibit a common nonconformity with life-abusing patterns of culture, we hope too that the alternatives they embrace will defy collective stereotyping or social, political, and spiritual/denominational predictability.

An Excerpt from the Westmont College 1995 Long Range Plan