

A thick haze of smog covers Beijing, and the polar ice caps are melting. Is this a post-apocalyptic nightmare? No, it's our home planet and we are faced with serious ethical issues if we are to continue living here. Science alone can't solve these challenges. Our generation needs a liberal arts education more than ever before, as the ethical issues of protecting our planet while providing for the needs of people require answers. Being a critical thinker with good communication skills is crucial to navigating the turbulent waters of our future.

Liberal arts study prepares us to answer complex, ethical questions such as, "Is building an oil pipeline over a water supply worth the risk, given that transporting oil by rail car is also dangerous?" The solution could be to use less oil. We have to look beyond short-time profits and analyze scientific findings with an ethical eye. Critical thinking helps us see an issue from multiple angles, which is needed now more than ever before. Classes such as history and anthropology help students understand patterns throughout the past, and subjects like mythology and sociology help people understand the true natures of cultures and societies.

The hallmarks of a liberal arts education are effective communication as well as critical thinking. Clear communication is essential to creating change and making our voices heard. We can better understand the world through collaboration and sharing ideas. Having knowledge from many disciplines results in well-rounded problem-solving and

effective leadership where all people's contributions are valued. We need leaders who can collaborate and see the big picture.

The study of liberal arts allows us to develop our own unique vision for the future. The distinctiveness and versatility of the subjects help us see the world in new ways. When contemplating how to balance people's needs with the health of the planet, liberal arts students can go beyond calculations on data, and interpret the facts in ways that have never been thought of before. A liberal arts education teaches us that life is not just about following the status quo. Instead, it encourages us think beyond it. Going beyond conventions helps us come up with new ways to balance saving the Earth and caring for all of humankind.

The knowledge and skills gained through the study of liberal arts provide our best chance to make a difference in the world. As the climate changes, many ethical dilemmas arise and a long-term view encompassing multiple disciplines, collaboration, critical thinking, and effective communication is needed. Saving the world requires us to think for ourselves and create a future that does not merely repeat the past. Our world is in danger, and someone needs to save it. We are those people, and a liberal arts education can help us do just that.