What is an “educated person”?

Department of Art
An “educated person” has been liberally educated. The individual has been exposed to a wide range of subjects and disciplines and mastered both their content as well as an awareness of the methods by which that content is judged. Of equal importance to the development of his or her analytical and critical faculties, the educated person has found his or her own expressive voice as a fully creative human being. Once the individual knows him or herself, discovered the values that are most meaningful, has mastered written and oral communication, and is able to manipulate a range of creative medias he or she able to make responsible contributions to this society.

Drama/Dance
An educated person must know how to THINK for him or herself, and be able to COMMUNICATE thought ARTICULATELY. An educated person must be grounded in knowledge of the world and its mechanisms. An educated person must be culturally literate on a local, national and global level. An educated person must have a deep and profound RELATIONSHIP with the ARTS both as an observer/researcher and a participant. It is incumbent on the educated person to understand the arts from the inside.

Music
The educated person should reflect the following characteristics:

The Competencies to be an Engaged Communicator, Listener and Observer
The educated person is one who can express himself in both written and oral contexts, and who can respond to an intellectual problem either spontaneously or after a period of research. This person should develop listening and visual competencies to discern and analyze the many non-verbal messages that pervade our twenty-first century media-driven world. This person should also have some experience with mathematics and other symbolic systems that form a means of more abstract communication.

Political, Cultural and Environmental Awareness
The educated person is one who strives for a deeper understanding of the natural and physical world, and environmental issues. This person should have the capacity to experience and be inspired by diverse political, social, artistic, religious and intellectual cultures and ideas.

The Desire and Skills to be a Participant
The educated person is one who participates in the intellectual and cultural conversation of his/her community, nation and world. He/She should be able to function and contribute harmoniously amidst a contrapuntal environment of concordant and discordant ideas. This person’s ideals and performance should inspire and touch the souls of others. He/She should clearly understand and feel compelled to active participation in a pluralistic society.

The music department curriculum offers elements of all the characteristics expressed above. Our general education offerings for both non-majors and majors train students both individually and collectively to focus on individual expression and ensemble performance. We are one of the few disciplines that teach the art of listening and the skill of collaboration. Our many lecture courses challenge students to explore western and non-western cultural, religious, political, mathematical, historical, sociological and philosophical ideas that prepare them to be critical thinkers and listeners when they graduate from The University of Montana.

Philosophy
One can find any number of statements of the basic skills, attitudes, and knowledge base that a
General Education program should provide to result in an "educated person." The attached statement from East Tennessee State University will serve as perhaps as good an example as any other; there seems no need to generate yet another statement of essentially the same nature.

What the Philosophy Department would like to add to such broad statements of general purpose is the insistence that the abilities and attitudes that almost all such statements agree should be a product of general education cannot be produced without a firm ground of specific knowledge. Just as reading specialists have come to understand that one cannot develop significant reading skills without an appropriate base of knowledge about the topics one is likely to be reading about, so too must those developing a program of general education understand that one cannot become an educated person simply by taking "appreciation" or "methods" courses in the appropriate range of subject areas, or by taking some "sampler" course in each area. To be educated with respect to the history of one's culture, one needs to know that history in some reasonable depth; to be educated with respect to science, one needs to know the fundamental concepts and principles that govern the physical and the biological sciences; and similarly for each of the core areas outlined in general education goals statements.

Knowledge without the development of any of the desired skills of judgment and application that are also called for in such goals statements would, to be sure, be insufficient. But there simply is no shortcut method to the development of such skills without the accompanying development of the appropriate background of knowledge. While relatively few have sought to provide courses to teach basic knowledge without attention to the skills required to create and to apply such knowledge, too many of late have sought to develop the skills without serious attention to the appropriate knowledge base. Skills and attitudes must develop in the process of learning the basics and cannot be adequately developed in abstraction from basic knowledge.

There is, no doubt, simply too much basic knowledge for any 30-credit, general education program to provide. College students do not come to campus with no prior education, however, and a serious program of general education at the college level must reflect a coordination with what students have learned before coming to college. If a student has had no serious introduction to basic concepts in science before coming to college, for example, there is little chance that a couple of science courses will produce an educated person. Most certainly that will be the case if the science courses are "Nutrition" and "The Use and Abuse of Drugs." Insistence upon the development of focused knowledge of basic facts, concepts, and principles needs to be maintained, and a coordinated structure of admissions requirements and honest core courses needs to be put in place for general education.

Coming to agreement on just what should constitute the core of basic knowledge will be easier in the natural sciences than in literature, but in every area the emphasis needs to be on what may defensibly be identified as of fundamental importance. Legitimate a scientific topic as nutrition is, what one needs to know about science to be an educated person is not be provided as well by an introductory course in nutrition as is by a course in basic physical science; legitimate an author as Horatio Alger may be, a course focusing on the works of Alger will not substitute in the core of a general education program for one focusing on the works of Shakespeare.

Let us work toward a program of general education under which attitudes and generally applicable skills are developed in the only way in which they may genuinely be fostered—by serious work toward mastery of fundamental knowledge in core areas.

Physics & Astronomy
The Department of Physics and Astronomy submits the following as our contribution to the continuing dialog concerning our university's general education program. We see this program as vital to our mission and key to our success in guiding students toward successful and productive lives in our global society.
1) Knowledge

An educated person has a broad base of knowledge, as well as an in-depth mastery of at least one specific academic discipline. This base includes an informed understanding of the knowledge foundations and the processes and methods by which that knowledge foundation is attained and refined for the physical, biological, and social sciences.

A firm foundation in the physical sciences is essential, with particular emphasis on the great ideas of the 19th and 20th centuries which have shaped our understanding of the universe and paved the way for advances in all areas of science and technology (the atomic model, energy conservation, entropy, relativity, quantum mechanics and cosmology).

The educated person has a firm grasp of history, both of their own culture and from a global perspective. This knowledge base also includes an appreciation for and understanding of the arts, both visual and performance, and a critical appreciation for the literature from various times and cultures.

2) Skills

An educated person must be able to exchange information intelligently. This includes the ability to write and speak with clarity and precision, as well as the ability to read and listen critically, to comprehend and summarize. Equally important are the desire to argue for your own beliefs, and the open-mindedness to abandon those beliefs when faced with superior arguments and/or new evidence. The educated person can access various modes of discourse, and in particular, must be able to produce and understand quantitative arguments, numerical estimates, and to use statistical data appropriately. The ability to reason and converse in mathematical terms cannot be over emphasized, and should be reinforced by a firm foundation in the methods of applied calculus, applied differential equations, or applied statistics.

3) Attitudes

An educated person pursues a lifelong commitment to make time for concentrated study and reflection. Everyone will have gaps in their knowledge, but an educated person knows how to ask the right questions, to systematically inform themselves in areas outside their chosen discipline, and most importantly they possess an intellectual curiosity that leads toward new knowledge and understanding. In addition, the educated person must possess a moral sensitivity which springs from a heightened sense of personal and academic integrity. Finally, the educated person thrives on academic rigor, and does not shy away from difficult or demanding academic disciplines.

Postscript:

Perhaps of greater importance than what we expect of our students, is what we expect of ourselves. Whether we are comfortable with the position or not, each faculty member and administrator at the University serves as a model of an educated person, both to our students, and to the community. It is in the things that we say and write, the actions that we take, the respect that we show for the institution, the personal and academic integrity we exhibit and the enthusiasm with which we perform our tasks and live our lives which most clearly demonstrates to students what we believe an educated person to be. More important than the courses that we require, it is the environment that we provide which will engender in our students the desire to seek a liberal education.

Thank you for providing this opportunity for us to express our views on these important issues.

Social Work

The educated person is to have the following characteristics:
• An ability to examine, evaluate and integrate knowledge drawn from a variety of sources and a variety of fields of study and inquiry;
• A commitment to on-going study and learning;
• An ability and willingness to critically examine one’s own beliefs and knowledge base;
• A capacity for critical thinking, especially in regard to how cultural, historical, economic, and political forces shape people’s beliefs, values, and behavior;
• An ability to communicate one’s thoughts in both written and verbal form;
• A basic understanding of the methods, strengths, and limitations of various systems of inquiry and creating knowledge;
• An understanding and appreciation of individual and group differences, especially those related to culture, ethnicity, gender, sexual identity, age, religion, and physical and mental abilities;
• An appreciation for diverse ways of knowing through literature, narratives, creative expression, mathematics and social science.

Sociology
I recently received a memo from Provost Lois Muir with a request. She asked that the faculty in our department send you a short memo with some ideas as to what constitutes an educated person. We had the opportunity to discuss this issue at a faculty meeting this afternoon and came up with the points below. We hope that you find this helpful.

An educated person can think critically and independently.
An educated person has the facility to understand abstract concepts. An educated person has fluency with a large body of facts. An educated person demonstrates clear, precise, and effective communication in a variety of media. An educated person has a broad geographic and historical perspective. An educated person has the ability to engage in clear, precise, and logical argumentation.