The College of Liberal Arts and Sciences comprises the traditional academic disciplines and may be considered the academic core of the University. Composed of nineteen departments, a variety of programs, and over 400 faculty members, the college is able to offer a rich and broad-based education in the liberal arts and sciences. Curricula leading to master's and doctoral degrees are offered in the physical and natural sciences, mathematics, the social sciences and the humanities. Some programs provide practical training and lead to professional certification. Most doctoral programs acquaint students with methods used in scholarly inquiry and require students to complete an independent research study. Students thus contribute to the University's mission to increase fundamental knowledge and apply that knowledge to the betterment of the human condition. Faculty in the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences have been recognized nationally and internationally for their important contributions to research and for their scholarly publications. Working with these faculty mentors, graduate students acquire an education that leads to the joy of intellectual discovery and its application in the real world.