ARTS & LETTERS

CITIZEN SCHOLARS

PROGRAM
NEW CITIZEN SCHOLARS PROGRAM LAUNCHES

The College of Arts & Letters’ Citizen Scholars program, which kicked off this fall with more than 90 students enrolled, is at the center of a strategic initiative to enrich the undergraduate experience, diversify the student body, and ensure the retention and academic success of students within the College.

Designed to prepare the next generation of diverse, high-achieving, and engaged citizen leaders who are able to meet the challenges of the 21st century, this unique scholarly program empowers students to embrace difference, deliberate publicly, think critically, and work collaboratively with local, national, and global organizations to create positive change.

“The Citizen Scholars program is designed to put an arts and humanities education into practice in a world in dire need of creative, visionary, and thoughtful citizen leaders,” said Christopher P. Long, Dean of the College of Arts & Letters. “The program empowers students to bring their education and their best selves to the wider world in order to transform it for the better.”

The program has three fundamental dimensions: Aspiration, Reward, and High Expectations.

Aspiration

Any student with at least one major in the College of Arts & Letters is invited to aspire to be a Citizen Scholar and perform their way into the program.

“We ask students to commit themselves to hard work, to aspire to reach beyond what they can currently grasp, and to embrace the kinds of experiences that will enable them to become better people capable of creating a more just and responsible world,” Long said.

Starting as freshmen, students who aspire to be Citizen Scholars take a first-year sequence of courses that emphasize excellent writing and an integrative approach to arts and humanities as engaged with the challenges the world faces. Through the Citizen Scholars program, students are expected to integrate ethical leadership and civic responsibility into their undergraduate experience.

Reward

Students who demonstrate sustained academic excellence over two semesters are admitted as Citizen Scholars and awarded $5,000 of enrichment funding to be used for study abroad or study away, undergraduate research, internships, or other enrichment opportunities. Citizen Scholars also are given priority status for paid undergraduate research opportunities as well as priority access to internships.

“We spoke with employers, alumni, and faculty about what they look for in effective graduates,” Long said. “In the process, it became clear that we need to provide our students with internship opportunities, study abroad experiences, and creative outlets through research and other activities that enable them to identify new solutions to intractable problems and to see the power of a liberal arts education when it is put into practice in the real world.”

Helping Students Succeed

Part of the program requires students become part of the Arts & Letters alumni network.

“One of the things we work with them on is understanding the power of networking,” Long said. “We want them to begin to think about how their lives are connected to and enriched by the broader arts and humanities community so they understand the transformative possibilities that open when the values of an arts and humanities education are put into practice to make a difference in the world.”

Admitted Citizen Scholars are challenged to meet extra requirements and perform at a higher level to graduate with the Arts & Letters Citizen Scholars designation.

Students who are admitted to the program join a cohort of highly motivated students who support and challenge one another to take advantage of the extraordinary opportunities at MSU.

Associate Professor of English Sandra Logan was named the inaugural Director of the Citizen Scholars program and started in this new position on July 1.

“The Citizen Scholars program provides valuable opportunities for undergraduates, encouraging them to aspire academically and to work communally within and beyond the University to transform their college experience, themselves, and our world,” Logan said. “I’m honored to have been selected as the Director.”