
Mission of the College

Vision

Calvin College is a comprehensive liberal arts college in the Reformed tradition of historic Christianity. Through our learning, we seek to be agents of renewal in the academy, church, and society. We pledge fidelity to Jesus Christ, offering our hearts and lives to do God's work in God's world.

Purpose

Our primary purpose is to engage in vigorous liberal arts education that promotes lifelong Christian service. We offer education that is shaped by Christian faith, thought, and practice. We study and address a world made good by God, distorted by sin, redeemed in Christ, and awaiting the fullness of God's reign. We aim to develop knowledge, understanding, and critical inquiry; encourage insightful and creative participation in society; and foster thoughtful, passionate, Christian commitments. Our curriculum emphasizes the natural, cultural, societal, and spiritual contexts in which we live; our teaching respects diverse levels, gifts, and styles of learning; and our learning proceeds as a shared intellectual task.

Another purpose is to produce substantial and challenging art and scholarship. We pursue intellectual efforts to explore our world's beauty, speak to its pain, uncover our own faithlessness, and proclaim the healing that God offers in Jesus Christ. We strive to embrace the best insights of Christian life and reflection; engage issues in the intellectual and public spheres; and enrich faith by the heritage of the past and the discoveries of today. Our faculty and staff are committed to keen and lively work in their chosen fields and to sharing its fruits with others.

We are also called to perform all our tasks as a caring and diverse educational community. We undertake our tasks in response to a divine calling. Together, we challenge ourselves to excellence as we acquire knowledge, cultivate aspirations, and practice lives of service. We seek to gather diverse people and gifts around a common pledge and purpose; pursue justice, compassion, and discipline; and provide a training ground for the life of Christian virtue. Our classrooms embody a community of faith and learning extending across campus and beyond.

Commitment

We profess the authority of scripture and the witness of the ecumenical creeds. We affirm the confessions and respect the rich traditions of Reformed believers worldwide and, in particular, those of the Christian Reformed Church. We aim to enhance the cultural life about us and to address local needs. In all we say and do, wherever we may be, we hope to follow and further the ways of God on earth.

Christian Community

Calvin College is a Christian academic community of faculty, students, and staff who come together for the purpose of pursuing liberal arts education in the Reformed Christian tradition. Members of the community experience the common bond of lives committed to Jesus Christ, of relationships guided by biblical principles of love, justice, and righteousness, and of gifts used for God's glory and the furtherance of His kingdom.

A commitment of the community is to seek, nurture, and celebrate cultural and ethnic diversity, in obedience to the biblical vision of the kingdom of God formed 'from every tribe and language and people and nation'. Its members are part of the family of Christ that transcends ethnic, cultural, racial, gender, and class boundaries; a community in which each member earnestly desires to use his or her gifts for the service and support of the other

members. The Calvin community has come together from wide-ranging backgrounds and places. Personal and spiritual maturity is uneven, expectations and goals, diverse. Obviously unanimous agreement by every member on the community's shared commitments is quite impossible. While no one is forced to acknowledge Jesus Christ as Lord, each one who has chosen to join the Calvin community thereby declares he or she is willing not to violate the community's values and commitments. While each member is chiefly accountable to God for his or her own life's pattern, all members also bear responsibility to and for one another in this community. God's infallible Scripture provides a trustworthy guide for our faith and life together. In addition to the explicit teachings of Scripture, which members strive to uphold, the college community also chooses to maintain certain standards of behavior for prudence and good order in our life together.

The History of the College and its Objectives

Calvin College is a college of the Christian Reformed Church, a century-old denomination with a five-century-old heritage. It bases its whole faith and life on the sacred Scriptures, God's holy, inspired, infallible Word, and thus takes its stand with the churches, which have their roots in the Protestant Reformation.

In America the Christian Reformed Church traces its origin to a band of immigrants who sought freedom in the nineteenth century from the established church of the Netherlands. They settled in western Michigan and, after an early period of religious unrest among the thousands of Dutch settlers who soon joined the earlier immigrants, organized the Christian Reformed Church in 1857.

The Christian Reformed Church subscribes to three statements of faith (in addition to the early Christian Apostles Creed), which stem from the Reformation period: the Heidelberg Catechism, which is the most famous and widely translated of all Reformation creeds; the Confession of Faith written by the Belgian theologian, Guido de Bréges, in 1561; and the Canons of Dordt.

The Christian Reformed Church stresses the sovereignty of God in every part of life—in the family, the church, and the state; in world affairs; in economic, social, and political life; in business; and in learning and the arts.

The founders of Calvin College came from the conservative wing of the Reformed churches in the Netherlands and honored John Calvin as the founder of that tradition. They believed that John Calvin had set out the best systematic formulation of the Christian faith and in so doing had created a foundation for all proper study of God's world. They were further inspired by his concern for higher education, in founding the Geneva Academy, and his all-embracing activism by which he sought to promote the reform of society and culture, as well as the church, according to the word of God.

The founding date of Calvin College and Seminary is 1876. In that year the Christian Reformed Church adopted a six-year curriculum for ministerial training. The first four of these years were spent in the Literary Department and the last two in the Theological Department. In 1894 students who were not pre-theological students were admitted to an expanded curriculum, and thus the school became a type of preparatory school or academy. In 1900 the curriculum was further broadened and made more attractive to students interested in teaching or in preparing for pre-professional courses in the universities. By 1906 the Literary Department, which provided the four-years of preparatory and two-years of college work, became known officially as the John Calvin Junior College. The two-year college in time became a four-year college, and the preparatory department was discontinued. In 1921 Calvin College awarded its first Bachelor of Arts degree.

The school, which had started with seven students, grew slowly during the early years, but by 1930 it had reached its pre-World War II size of 350–450 students. By 1950 the enrollment had climbed to 1,270 and now is approximately 4,200.

The curriculum has expanded to include professional training in a variety of fields, but the college maintains a strong commitment to its liberal arts curriculum as a means to develop students' understanding of God's world and their place in it.

Government

The corporate name of the college is Calvin College. It is governed by a single board of trustees, which represents the ecclesiastical geographical districts of the church. The membership of the board is constituted of representatives elected by the various classes, nominations from the alumni association, and by the board of trustees. These are approved by synod. The Board of Trustees meets in October, February, and May. An executive committee functions for the board throughout the academic year.

Compliance with Legal Requirements

Calvin College, in accordance with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, operates in a non-discriminatory manner with regard to race, color, age, or national origin. Furthermore, as required by Title IX of the 1972 Education Amendments, Calvin College does not discriminate on the basis of sex in its educational programs, activities, or employment policies. Calvin College also provides equal opportunity for qualified handicapped persons in accordance with the requirements of Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990. Instructional and other physical facilities are readily accessible to handicapped students and special rooms in the residence halls are designed for barrier-free living. The Director of Student Academic Services provides advice and support to students with disabilities. Inquiries and appeals regarding compliance with these federal requirements should be directed to the Vice President for Administration and Finance, Calvin College Financial Services Office, as Civil Rights, Title IX, and Section 504 coordinator. Student appeals will be heard by the Academic Standards Committee.

Accreditation and Affiliation

Calvin College is accredited by the Commission on Institutions of Higher Education of the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools. It is also accredited by the American Chemical Society, National Association of Schools of Music, and the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education. The Calvin Nursing Program has applied for accreditation from the Commission on Collegiate Nursing Education and is approved by the Michigan Board of Nursing; the Engineering Program is accredited by the Engineering Accreditation Commission of ABET, 111 Market Place, Suite 1050, Baltimore, MD 21202-4012 - telephone: (410) 347-7700; and the Social Work Program is accredited by the Council on Social Work Education. The accreditation documents from these agencies are on file in the Office of the Provost and are available for review in that office upon request.

The College also has membership in a number of professional associations and organizations. It is on the American Association of University Women list of institutions qualified for membership in the association. It maintains membership in the American Council on Education, the Association of Independent Colleges and Universities of Michigan, the National Association of Independent Colleges and Universities, the Council of Independent Colleges, the American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education, the Mathematical Association of America, the Michigan Academy of Science, Council for Christian Colleges and Universities, Arts, and Letters, and the American Mathematical Society. It is a member of the Christian College Coalition, Michigan Campus Compact, and is an affiliate member of the American Society of Engineering Education.

Calendar, Summer School

The academic calendar at Calvin College forms the typical 4-1-4 plan consisting of two semesters, each approximately four months in length, plus a one-month interim term in January. Students normally take 12–17 semester hours during each of the two semesters and 3–4 semester hours during the interim.

The summer semester offers 3–4 week courses with daytime and evening courses and weeklong graduate workshops. Students can normally complete up to three regular courses during the summer session.