Plato University

Bachelor of Arts in Global Challenges

Our goal at Plato University is twofold - creating positive outcomes for individual students and the world at large. We want students to reach their goals, maximize their potential, and live fulfilling lives. We also want to make meaningful solutions to the global challenges our world faces. So our education is designed to push people to launch new careers solving the world's greatest challenges.

Year One: Foundations

The first-year at Plato University is devoted to the Foundational courses that are designed to help students develop foundational skills and habits that underlie five core competencies — thinking critically, thinking creatively, communicating effectively, interacting effectively, and building one's character — that are required to solve any major problem in life from the personal to the global.

Coaching & Development

Plato University coaches help students with self discovery, creating goals, and connecting a student's work with a bigger purpose. They work with students to develop a personalized learning path that fits their life and goals, evaluates progress and pivots plans as necessary, and guides them through their academic journey at Plato University. They also provide mental and emotional inquiry & support for students during their education. Rather than have coaching be separate, we treat this as any other course, awarding students credit for the skills they are building.

During year one, coaching is focused on helping the student learn about themselves and the landscape of opportunities available to them, as well as being a support and accountability partner for transitioning to college life.

Learning outcomes:

- Understanding of who they are, what they are passionate about, and what difference they want to make in the world
- Discerning between self interest and societal and childhood programming

- Explore curiosities that could become passions, later leading to a purpose
- Assess strengths, weaknesses, personalities, behaviors, values, and working style
- Developing a learning plan

Associated Skills: goal setting, time management, personal financial management, career management, personal branding and professional communication

Metalearning

Learning literacy is the ability and willingness to learn in a self-directed and self-initiated fashion. Because much of the pedagogy at Plato University requires students to learn in this way, we help students prepare by giving them metacognitive skills as the beginning of their learning journey.

Learning outcomes:

- Develop learning plans to engage in mastery process of any skill
- Create optimal learning environments
- Develop time management skills for learning
- Apply 18 learning techniques from the science of learning
- Preparing the brain for cognitive work
    - Understanding neuroscience, brain plasticity, neurochemicals, and how they affect daily life
    - Understanding the brain body connection and how to influence the brain through physiological states
    - Understand psychology, emotions, and how they influence your brain's thought patterns
    - Utilizing neuroplasticity to wire and rewire brain for desired habits, thought patterns, and reactions
    - Utilizing ancestral practices such as meditation and breathwork
    - How to fuel your brain with nutrition
    - Brain biohacking, nootropics, & psychedelics
    - Understanding and utilizing flow states for deep & creative work

Associated Topics: Learning literacy, metacognitive skills, neuroscience, cognitive Science, psychology, health

Critical Thinking

Critical thinking is required now more than ever with the amount of information, decisions, and global problems our world faces today. Critical thinking involves analyzing, evaluating, and knowing when to apply data, knowledge, or a particular skill set. Critical thinking involves fully understanding a problem from each angle, knowing the amount of uncertainty in the situation, and all the factors that could affect the outcomes of making an effective decision. In Bloom's Taxonomy Apply, Analyze, and Evaluate require deeper levels of thinking about information. When students apply knowledge, they take ideas and concepts and use them in new ways. When students analyze they draw conclusions from a wide range of domains. When students evaluate they justify stands or decisions. These skills are what make a critical thinker and they all come before creative thinking.

Learning outcomes:

- Understand & Evaluate Information - Explaining Ideas Or Concepts
    - Information & Media Literacy
    - Navigating and actively engaging different forms of information & communication
    - Distinguish between scientific and non scientific information
    - Evaluate probabilities and sampling appropriately
    - Evaluate and apply statistics
    - Evaluate and apply human psychology & sociology
- Applying Information & Knowledge To New Contexts
    - Link disparate supporting data and information
    - Identify, analyze, and organize characteristics of information, and use these to interpret other forms of information
    - Describe interactions events or characteristics at different levels of analysis to generate interpretations of phenomena
    - Apply knowledge of the characteristics to complex systems in order to understand the whole versus its parts
- Analyzing Problems
    - Understand the context of a problem (historical, cultural, disciplinary)
    - Identify gaps of where a creative solution is required
    - Characteristics of the nature of the problem
    - Break the problem down into organizable and tractable components to design solutions
    - Identify variables and parameters of a problem

    - Apply and evaluate game theory models
- Analyzing Arguments
    - Distill complex arguments, identifying and analyzing premises & conclusions
    - Use estimation techniques to determine whether quantitative claims are plausible
    - Formulate Arguments based on evidence
- Evaluating Inferences
    - Apply and interpret formal deductive logic
    - Identify and correct logical fallacies
    - Apply inductive reasoning appropriately; recognize more than one generalization is possible.
    - Identify biases in attention, perception, memory, forms of communication, that may affect what inferences are drawn from
- Effective Decision Making
    - Identify and evaluate goals, values, and guiding principles that will determine how an individual or organization will make decisions.
    - Recognize and evaluate foundational commitments
    - Perform cost benefit analysis
    - Identify and analyze the effects of risk vs uncertainty
    - Consider and evaluate multiple choice alternatives simultaneously when making decisions
    - Interpret and analyze decision support tools to explore the consequences of decisions

Associated Topics: Decision Making/ Decision Theory, ambiguity, uncertainty, media & information literacy, logic, epistemology, probability & statistics, cognitive biases, historical context, analyzing problems, psychology, motivation & incentives

Creative Thinking

Critical thinking was the ability to understand, analyze, and evaluate information and knowledge and then know when to correctly apply it. Creative thinking uses these skills as a foundation to synthesize and produce something new or original, often in pursuit of the student's animus or declared mission. Creative thinking is a marriage between science and art to create solutions that effectively solve problems while simultaneously enriching the culture. It is the practice of combining or rearranging two or more unlikely things in new and useful ways. Creativity is based on facilitated discovery, generating solutions to

problems, and creating something new. Traditional schooling beats creativity out of us to prepare us for factories and cubicles, yet this is not how innovation and creativity thrive.

Learning outcomes:

- Problem Solving
    - Identify the root problem
    - Identify problems that are analogous
    - Identify effectiveness of existing solutions
    - Brainstorm potential new solutions and predict their effectiveness
    - Evaluate and apply optimization techniques
    - Apply algorithmic thinking to solve real world problems
    - Apply simulation modeling to test scenarios
    - Identify biases to presented solutions from availability, representation, and other problem solving heuristics and learn to correct errors
- Use and application of the scientific method
    - Learn to evaluate data and generate hypotheses
    - Evaluate theories and previous studies
    - Recognize and apply models to explain data and make predictions
    - Interpret, analyze, and create data visualizations and explanations
    - Apply experimental design
    - Design and interpret observational studies
    - Design and interpret primary research performed as interviews or surveys
    - Design and interpret case studies
    - Evaluate and incorporate reclability in empirical study design
    - Identify and evaluate appropriate controls for empirical study design
    - Identify variables to change
- Establishing a Creative Practice
    - Understand and hone intuition to pick subtleties and patterns the conscious mind does not readily detect
    - Understand how to deconstruct, emulate, analyze, and repeat the work of other creatives
    - Understand the why, goals, and risks of a creative project
    - Creating daily creative actions and processes to develop creative muscle
- Creating solutions using design thinking
    - Understand universal design principles
    - Apply iterative design thinking to conceive and refine products or solutions

    - Apply heuristics to find creative solutions to problems and formulate solutions
    - Given a particular problem, use reverse engineering to abstract key elements that can be applied to solve other problems
- Identify 21st century tools for creative creation
    - No code tools vs coding tools
    - Advanced technologies
- Understanding how human's decisions, solutions, and creations impact and influence evolution
    - Implement key tracking metrics to follow solutions impact and effectiveness
    - Use progressive modeling to predict impact of solutions

Associated Topics: design thinking, innovation, scientific method, coding

Communication

In order to solve global challenges, critical thinking and creative thinking can not be understated in their importance. However, if one is not able to communicate the result of that thinking to others and persuade them of its merit then it gains no momentum. One must understand all the modes of communication from verbal expression to media and know which fits the situation best. One must also understand that various modes of communication generally occur simultaneously and need to work together as symphonies to effectively explain, persuade, and inform others. Before speaking one must learn to actively listen to understand others and tailor their message to their audience so that communication is geared towards not tearing each other down but looking for solutions.

Learning Outcomes:

- Acquire ability to analyze what others communicate both written and verbal
    - Develop an open mind to see the world through others eyes
    - Create dialogue of previously examined layers of self & bias and how that frames other's communication
    - Learn to actively listen and engage in understanding others in conversation
    - Learn to break down arguments from others
- Learn the ability to actively listen, have empathy, and hold space for others
    - Coaching yourself
    - Coaching others
- Write and speak clearly

    - Formulate a well designed thesis
    - Effectively organize communications
    - Communicate with clear and precise style
    - Follow established guidelines to present communications professionally
    - Understand connotations, tone, style
    - Develop evidence back communication
    - Tailor Oral and written work for the context and audience
- Use Nonverbal Effectively
    - Interpret Facial Expressions
    - Interpret and use body language
- Using and interpreting multiple forms of media to communicate
    - Using art as a communication tool
    - Using music as a communication tool
    - Using visual graphics as a communication tool
    - Using digital media as a communication tool
    - Using social media as a communication tool
- Understand technology and communication
    - Understand the cognitive and emotional differences between in person and online communication
- Understand and apply the art of persuasion to communicate
    - Understand cognitive persuasion techniques
    - Understand emotional persuasion techniques
    - Understand and interpret manipulative media, propaganda techniques, and fake news
    - Understand and interpret the communication to sell through copywriting and advertising

Associated Topics: Discourse & dialogue, nonviolent communication, coaching, rhetoric, writing, social media marketing, digital marketing, copywriting, persuasion, mediation, negotiation, combating propaganda, public relations, public speaking

Collaboration

The human species has evolved to thrive in complex social systems from the age of tribes to entire communities, organizations, and governments. In order to accomplish any goal, one must learn how to effectively interact with others. This is true at the scale of intimate relationships to entire world organizations. Each of these relationships exist within a complex social system where the behavior of interdependent individuals can not be

isolated and aggregated to realize the collective behavior. In this relationship, individuals affect the collective and the collective affects the individual.

For these reasons it is crucial for students to see themselves as not just mere cogs in a system but rather as agents whose behaviors and initiatives have the power to influence these systems. Collaboration starts at the world level and drills down to individuals in this system, understanding how to influence both individual members of a system and the system as whole as well. Students learn how to step up as leaders, but also how to effectively be a team member, and how to distinguish between when one is required to reach an agreed upon goal. They also gain deep knowledge about themselves and how to relate and navigate this understanding with others.

Learning Outcomes:

- Understanding Our World
    - Understand the phenomenon of complex systems in our society
    - Understand systems as a whole
    - Understand self as a member of those complex systems
    - Understand how systems interact with each other
    - Learn how to interact with individuals within particular systems and how to interact with the systems themselves
    - Learn to deconstruct systems in primary components, accounting for the most relevant groups of those systems and the individuals who make up that group.
    - Identify the emergence of rules, properties, and ways components of that system interact with one another
    - Understand the network of the system
    - Understand cause and effect relationships inside and outside the system
- Understanding Ourselves And others
    - Determine the motivation of self and others
    - Be proactive and take responsibility for own actions
- Learning how to have intervention in a system
    - Identify leverage points
- Working with stakeholders: Negotiating, Mediating, and Persuading
    - Negotiate and mediate, including looking for mutual gains
    - Mediate disagreements
    - Use structured approach in negotiation to reach desired result

    - Prepare multidimensional best alternative to a negotiated agreement
    - Evaluate counterarguments ny considering emotional, logical, personal, and other factors
    - Recognize strength and weaknesses in both yours and your opponents strategies
    - Identify and analyze common ground
    - Use persuasive techniques to nudge another decisions
    - Use cognitive tools to persuade
    - Understand and use emotional tools of persuasion
    - Consider perspective of others to craft a persuasive argument
    - Present views and work with appropriate level of confidence
    - Learn to right strategic plans and policy
- Working effectively with others
    - Apply principles of effective leadership to motivate and inspire others
    - Learn to effectively reach team goals and confront problems to reaching those
    - Learn to distribute authority and decision making effectively
    - Learn to assign team roles effectively, considering the strengths and weakness of the team and the task at hand
    - Influence group interactions by exerting different types of power
    - Identify and analyze how reinforcement and punishment alter behavior
    - Mitigate the role of conformity in group settings by avoiding blindly conforming to external expectations
    - Recognize and leverage people's skills, abilities,traits, attitudes, and beliefs
    - Understand the impact of an organizational structure on individual performance and collaborative projects
    - Discover and assess your own strengths and weaknesses
    - Monitor yourself to know what you don't know
    - Identify strengths and weaknesses, exercise humility,and mitigate behavior and habits that result in overconfidence or impair effectiveness
    - Use emotional intelligence to interact effectively
- Resolving Ethical problems and having social consciousness
    - Examine our role in creating a better world
    - Identify ethical problems framing them in a way that will help resolve them
    - Resolve conflicts between ethical principles by using the context to prioritize
    - Recognize and mitigate unfair practices
    - Follow through on commitments be proactive and take responsibility

Associated Topics: systems thinking, ethics, political science, policy, civics, leadership, project management, conflict resolution, engaging stakeholders, social work, psychology, incentives, power dynamics, social and emotional intelligence

Character Building

Our fifth foundational course prepares students for navigating the real world, both in the workplace and their personal and interpersonal lives. The focus is helping to create fully actualized individuals who have practical life skills and cognitive tools for achieving whatever goals they have set for themselves in the future.

Learning outcomes:

- Understand the self through self actualization and living a purposeful life
    - Create independence by nurturing free inquiry, deep reflection, and a drive to ask interesting questions and find compelling answers
    - Understand values, interests, personality, strengths
    - Ability to look at own life, establish what is factually occurring, and address direction to be in accordance with self set goals
    - Understand and test core beliefs by seeking new experiences, perspectives, and cultures
    - Developing one's own definition of success
    - Connect study and work to consequential questions in a larger and global context
    - Develop insight into one's own strengths, interests, values, identity status, skills and personal qualities
    - Understanding one's own spiritual beliefs
    - Practicing gratitude
    - Understand the concepts of flourishing, happiness, meaning and purpose in life, including knowing what they are, why they matter, and how best to attain these states
    - Fear setting and creating an operating system for thriving in high stress environments
    - Identifying and working through shadow elements of the self and past traumas
- Utilizing life architecture to design the life you want and acquiring life skills

    - Appreciate the context surrounding vocational choices, including historical, socioeconomic and cultural factors
    - Learning how to manage time efficiently
    - Gaining practical skills and methods to realize goals from preparing taxes to maintaining friendships
    - Prepare for the practical matters related to life after college, including searching for a job, cultivating mentors, budgeting, choosing benefits, finding and keeping housing, saving for retirement, and pursuing work-life balance
- Developing Character Learning outcomes
    - Adopting a growth mindset and knowing that we are capable of evolving, viewing every challenge as an opportunity for growth
    - Respecting others perspectives, cultures, and right to a purposeful life
    - Cultivating empathy and emotional intelligence
    - Fostering curiosity of everything, asking questions, and withholding judgment before exploring
    - Welcoming collaboration to support each other and enhance the collective and future generations
    - Taking initiative, being a self starter, and taking extreme ownership of ones life
    - Exercising focus and management of time, resources, and energy to achieve goals
    - Developing resilience and grit by seeking out difficulty, enduring complexity and ambiguity, persisting to completion
    - Expressing oneself authentically by finding strength in your differences and how that fits in a wider context and community.
- Interpersonal relationship building
    - Seduction
    - Relationship structures
    - Sex
- Preparing the brain for cognitive work
    - Understanding neuroscience, brain plasticity, neurochemicals, and how they affect daily life
    - Understanding the brain body connection and how to influence the brain through physiological states
    - Understand psychology, emotions, and how they influence your brain's thought patterns

    - Utilizing neuroplasticity to wire and rewire brain for desired habits, thought patterns, and reactions
    - Utilizing ancestral practices such as meditation and breathwork
    - How to fuel your brain with nutrition
    - Brain biohacking, nootropics, & psychedelics
    - Understanding and utilizing flow states for deep & creative work
- Understanding how the body functions and optimizing energy, health, and longevity
    - Understanding complex systems of the body
    - Optimizing sleep patterns
    - Understand how to build functional muscle for life & longevity
    - Understanding body recovery mechanisms
    - Optimizing personal nutrition, fix leaky gut & brain
    - How to track, quantify, and use data tests for personalized health
    - Using ancestral wisdom and modern science to maximize health and life span

Associated Topics: Exploration of the self (self-esteem, self-image, self-efficacy), self-determination & motivation, self-reflection, sensemaking, meaning making, psychology, health, philosophy, ethics & virtues

Solutionary Thinking

Students learn how to engage with problems using the solutionary framework created by the Institute for Humane Education (Identify, Investigate, Innovate, and Implement) in order to create a thesis and plan for execution towards solving problems. Students will engage in this process multiple times throughout their time at Plato University in their studios and skill courses.

Learning Outcomes:

- Understanding and applying the Solutionary Process to solve problems
    - Phase 1: Identifying the Problem
    - Phase 2: Investigating the Issue
    - Phase 3: Innovating Solutions
    - Phase 4: Implementing Solutions
- Developing solutions that do the most good and least harm

Associated Topics: Project management, systems thinking, design thinking, research

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Welcome to the 21st Century

This course allows students to get a pulse on the state of our world at the present time of them taking it and the systems that brought us to this point. Emphasis is placed on the global challenges our world is facing and what that means for them in their lifetimes. The course is updated consistently in order to be up to date with the most recent developments.

Learning Outcomes:

- Understanding historical and contemporary contexts and how they are related
- Identifying interrelated systems affecting global issues
- Connecting global issues to personal motivations
- Identifying sources of accurate information

Associated Topics:

- History, sustainable development goals, economics, political science

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Year Two: Mission

At Plato University we help connect intrinsic passions that student's have explored to grand challenges our world faces. By connecting a student's learning to global problems we can create a sense of purpose and create real consequences for their learning.

Declare a mission, not a major

During the second year, students will explore and declare missions, global challenges they wish to solve, rather than majors. Missions are created by combining a student's passions, a global challenge, and the skills necessary to achieve that mission.

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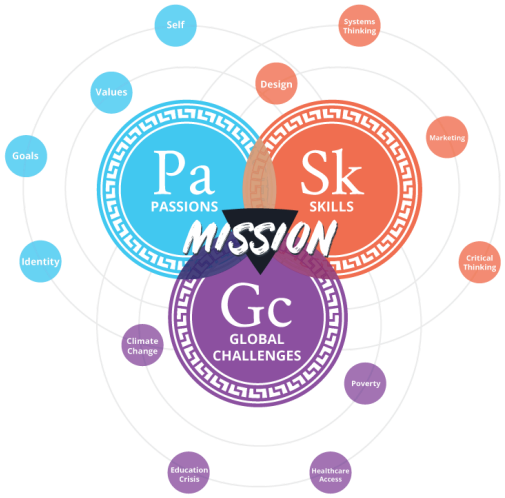


Missions are fundamentally different from majors. At a traditional university, a student may decide to major in biology. That major will help prepare students for working in fields related to biology but may be less applicable to anything outside of biology. At Plato University, a student declares a mission and learns whatever skills are necessary to achieve that mission. For example, if their mission was providing clean drinking water for the world, they may learn skills that would be traditionally taught in biology, computer science, business, sociology, and more. This prepares students to actually make real change in the world while simultaneously preparing them for many avenues for work.

Introduction to Global Challenges

Students will be given the opportunity to explore a variety of Global Challenges to find what they are truly passionate about. Each global challenge will be given its own course which will explore the causes, systems underlying, obstacles to solutions, and portfolio of current solutions being developed. Students may take multiple Global Challenge courses. If students find a global challenge they care about early, then they may move on to taking skill courses related to that global challenge and specializations.

Global Challenges that students may choose:

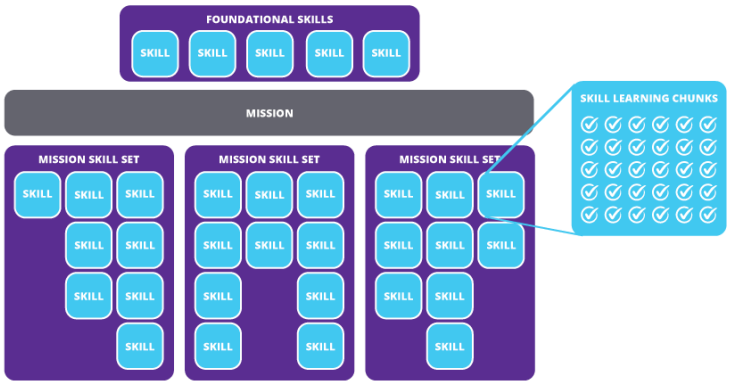
- Education
- Climate change & Environmental Protection
- Risks from Artificial Intelligence
- Health, Mental Health, & Wellbeing
- Poverty

- Human Rights
- Animal Rights
- Sustainable cities & Homelessness
- Clean Water
- Hunger & Food Scarcity
- World Governance, War, and International Relations

Coaching & Development

During Year two, coaching is focused on helping students develop a direction for their studies and begin creating personalized learning pathways. Students will reflect with their coaches on global challenges they care about, discover career opportunities that match their strengths and interests, and continue their self development.

After discovering the Global Challenge they care about, they will develop a thesis about how their chosen challenge could be solved. Students will then work with coaches to develop personalized learning pathways. A student's personalized learning pathway is created by stacking skills that guide what the student needs to learn in order to successfully complete their mission. These skills will be specific to their chosen mission, such as climate science for climate change, and to the career specializations associated with that mission, such as climate modeling, digital marketing, or .



Studio or Internship

Studios are an opportunity for students to demonstrate mastery of skills and test possible solutions for their chosen missions. As students engage in self-paced interactive learning on their own time, they will also engage in studios to practice their skills in group projects aimed at having a real, positive outcome in the world. These projects combine the passions and skills of each of the learners to solve a problem in a real organization, business, or social group.

The phases of studio projects are as follows:

- **Explore (4 Weeks):** The explore phase is focused on introducing students to topics, problems, and perspectives. These experiences provide a breadth of knowledge and are meant to build a foundation for understanding while challenging worldviews and perspectives, exposing students to various industries, problems to be solved, and people in this space.
- **Engage (4 Weeks):** Engagement experiences allow for a depth of knowledge. They are focused and allow students to sharpen their understanding of a certain topic, problem, or perspective through an interactive exercise, discussion, or challenge. These experiences help students synthesize what they have learned from their exposure experiences and apply it to a focused challenge or question.
- **Execute (6 Weeks):** Students demonstrate real world application of knowledge learned through projects which are used to evaluate mastery and build a portfolio. These projects allow them to apply knowledge to real world problems and discover how they can channel their passions and purpose in a meaningful way.
- **Portfolio (2 Weeks):** Over the course of their time at Plato University Students will create presentations and portfolios of their work which can be shared with prospective employers in the future.

Internship alternatives: Students may secure internships in organizations focused on missions they wish to pursue. Students will still be responsible for reporting on their experience, creating presentations and portfolios of their work.

Skill Courses

To develop individual skills in a student's learning pathway, skill courses are specific to each student's chosen mission and specialization they wish to pursue. Skill courses are given using open education resources and self directed courses available online. Students may

test out of skill courses and earn credits without taking the course by demonstrating mastery of that skill beforehand.

How Skill Courses are Evaluated:

- **Mastery Pre-assessment:** Students master subjects at different rates and bring diverse levels of prior experience and knowledge to that mastery. We acknowledge past experience through self-diagnostic tools, or pre-assessments, at the beginning of each course for students to measure their knowledge. If a student demonstrates mastery of this skill, then they will not be required to take the course related to it.
- **Mastery Progress:** To demonstrate progress to mastering a skill during a course, students are periodically given “check your understanding” questions. Students are not required to complete these and no grades are assigned to these, rather they exist to create spaced repetition, recall, and inform the student of their progress towards mastery.
- **Mastery Assessment:** To complete the skill course, students must complete a project related to the skill and portfolio presentation. Additionally, we employ rigorous assessments that top employers use for industry certification in that skill.

Year Three: Mastery

Coaching & Development

During year three, coaching will focus on developing a thesis for their capstone project about how they may be able to solve their chosen global challenge. Students will work with coaches to develop a plan and personalized learning pathways to fulfill that plan.

Studio or Internship

Studios and Internships will be more focused on the student’s declared mission, ideally working on projects in fields associated with their global challenge and skills courses.

Skill Courses

Skill courses are given using open education resources and self directed courses available online. Skill courses are specific to each student's chosen mission and specialization they

wish to pursue. For example, if a student is tackling climate change they may be taking courses in climate science. Additionally, if they want to specialize as a marketer based on their passions and strengths, they may be taking courses in digital marketing. Students may test out of skill courses and earn credits without taking the course by demonstrating mastery of that skill beforehand.

Year Four: Mastery

Coaching & Development

During year four, coaching will provide necessary support for completing the capstone. Coaches will also help with transitioning, personally and professionally, to life after college which includes instilling lifelong learning habits, helping to develop portfolios and personal brands, helping to secure employment, giving guidance to career opportunities, missteps to avoid, and how to make career transitions.

Capstone

For students to be evaluated for graduation, students must complete a final capstone project. The Capstone project is the students' chance to test their theory about how to solve their chosen global challenge. Students are assessed on their demonstration of skills mastered, not on if they actually solve the problem. The options available to them for the focus of their Capstone project are limited only by their imagination. They could write an original screenplay, create code for a disruptive technology, or even develop a business plan for a bold and exciting social venture. They may work alone or in a group. Students will present and defend their thesis in front of peers and a panel of judges.

Skill Courses

Students will complete the last of their skill courses.