

# Ampersand: Integrative Learning Across the Curriculum

Ampersand is the student experience at Emory & Henry College that focuses on **integrative learning** where students connect what they care about to what they are learning, then design and implement projects that contribute to the common good. Ampersand creates a culture of active, hands-on learning in which students connect experiences across disciplines, curricular and co-curricular activities, personal experiences on and off campus, and to the larger world. Ampersand also emphasizes the connections between people, faculty, staff, other students, community partners, alumni, and among different disciplines and activities, creating a "whole" and unique experience for each student.

**Project-based work** is the means to integrative learning; therefore, students are supported in experiential learning opportunities in a variety of settings. Students are introduced to the concept of project-based learning in their Core 100 course, and projects are an integral approach to learning in other core courses and in majors and minors. Some students' work may culminate in a major project; other students may work on a series of projects that represent their endeavors. Projects come in all shapes and sizes, from the more traditional to the wildly experimental. They are found not only embedded in single courses but also extending over several semesters, both inside and outside the classroom. Engaged students, from their classrooms and laboratories to co-curricular activities and service learning, are encouraged to explore, to try out, to share, even to fail, as they pursue their ideas in a multitude of projects from scientific research to creative performances.

Inherent to this process is **critical reflection**, where students take time to review their efforts, make connections across classes and activities, and make plans for future work. Critical reflection is the process students use to find greater and additional meaning in their experiences, often through questioning which is descriptive, analytical, and critical. It is an additional way for students to interact with and internalize the material and the learning process, and to better understand themselves. It can take many forms including written, oral, or artistic, and is often, but not always, guided by prompts based on the desired student learning outcomes.

Critical reflection is a key component of the **learning portfolio**, an electronic portfolio that connects student projects to reflection on knowledge, work, curiosity, and personal passion. Learning portfolios are introduced in the Core 100 Self course and are utilized in various ways throughout the student's Emory & Henry experience. Students are encouraged to utilize their portfolios as lifelong learning tools.