The College of Arts and Humanities consists of eight departments: American Studies, Art, Theatre and Dance, History, Music, Philosophy, Religion, and Speech.

The role of the college is to implement the mission statement of the university, which is:

- to provide all qualified people in Hawaii an equal opportunity for quality college and university education
- to create knowledge and gain insights through research and scholarship
- to preserve and contribute to the artistic and cultural heritage of the community
- to provide other public service through the dissemination of current and new ideas and techniques.

The college serves two broad constituencies: (1) students seeking general education subjects within and beyond the arts and sciences "Core" and (2) undergraduate and graduate majors within our eight departments and in the Honors and Liberal Studies programs. The college has over 1,300 majors and serves over 12,240 students each semester.

In concert with the role the college plays in implementing and enhancing state and university plans and in helping departments, faculty, staff, and students reach their goals, our mission is:

- to support the university’s special interest in Asia and the Pacific
- to reaffirm the centrality of the arts and humanities in higher education
- to help students adapt to rapid cultural and technological change
- to reassert the value of personal involvement in and responsibility to society
- to prepare students for meaningful positions in the economy of Hawai‘i, the nation and the Pacific.

Because of the university’s geographical position, the college and its departments are unusually conscious of the importance of the Pacific Basin nations and Asia, and many course offerings in proportion of the teaching and research in these areas has been done by faculty and students in our college. The college maintains a close relationship with the School of Hawaiian, Asian, and Pacific Studies (SHAPS), because so many of our faculty are involved in the SHAPS activities.