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## Air, Water, Earth, and Fire: The Ancient Elements on a Changing Planet

PLACE

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## **Air, Water, Earth, and Fire: The Ancient Elements on a Changing Planet (PLACE Theme for 2015-16)**

This theme opened up a wide array of possibilities for inquiry, across the disciplines, as well as for student outreach, projects, debates, art installations, and the like. It directly connected to a wide range of existing courses, programs, and infrastructure, allowing these strengths to be highlighted and enhanced. It spoke to our immediate location, rich in clean water, clean air and fertile soils; and to our role in the national and global community.

In addition to topical conversations, this PLACE theme inspired debate that potentially will shape students' lives and decision making for years to come: change and adaptation, past and future; social justice and equity; accounting for value beyond dollars, such as beauty, happiness, health, and community; long-term versus short-term planning; the interplay between fact and belief; deep investigation and hidden variables. Such debates are not only key to academic inquiry within disciplines, they speak directly to the value of the liberal arts education itself.