



Core Commitments:
Educating Students for Personal and Social
Responsibility

Core Commitments: Contexts and Framings

Caryn McTighe Musil,
Senior Vice President, AAC&U &
Director, Core Commitments

Core Commitments Symposium,
"Education for Personal and Social
Responsibility: Building Collective
Institutional Commitment"

October 17-18, 2007 Denver, CO



Liberal Education

- A philosophy of education that empowers individuals, liberates the mind, cultivates intellectual judgments, and fosters ethical and social responsibility
- By its nature, liberal learning is global and pluralistic. It embraces the diversity of ideas and experiences that characterize the social, natural, and intellectual world.

The Higher Education Challenge

But what do college students say they are hoping to get from their time studying?

Top tier outcomes for college education in student focus groups

- Maturity and ability to succeed on one's own
- Time-management skills
- Strong work habits
- Self-discipline
- Teamwork skills and ability to get along with different types of people

Middle tier outcomes for students

- Tangible business skills and specific expertise in field of focus
- Critical thinking skills
- Communication skills
- Problem-solving skills and analytical ability
- Exposure to business world
- Leadership skills

Least Important Outcomes

- Values, principles, ethics
- Tolerance and respect for different cultural backgrounds
- Competency in computer skills
- Expanded cultural and global awareness and sensitivity
- Civic responsibility and orientation toward public service

Oppositional Views

“Civic responsibility and leadership are qualities that individuals are born with. . .”

High School Student in an
AAC&U Focus Group

Benjamin Barber

“We may be born free, but we are not born citizens—we have to acquire the traits that enable us to participate effectively in the world.”

Making the Case for Educating for Personal and Social Responsibility

- Colleges and universities in the U.S. agree on essential learning outcomes for the 21st century

The Essential Learning Outcomes

Beginning in school, and continuing at successively higher levels across their college studies, students should prepare for twenty-first-century challenges by gaining:

- **Knowledge of Human Cultures and the Physical and Natural World**
- **Intellectual and Practical Skills**
- **Personal and Social Responsibility**
- **Integrative Learning**

Essential Learning Outcome # 3

■ Personal and Social Responsibility

- Civic knowledge and engagement—local and global
- Intercultural knowledge and competence
- Ethical reasoning and action
- Foundations and skills for lifelong learning

Anchored through active involvement with diverse communities and real-world challenges

PSR Institutional Inventory Measures Opportunities for--

- Striving for Excellence
- Cultivating Personal and Academic Integrity
- Contributing to a Larger Community
- Taking Seriously the Perspectives of Others
- Developing Competence in Ethical and Moral Reasoning

Core Commitments Goals

- Orchestrate a proactive, high visibility initiative
- Serve as a catalyst for fostering ethical and civic outcomes of a contemporary liberal education
- Invent more purposeful, transparent, and developmental pathways for students to acquire new capacities
- Generate research tools and evidence that reveals what kind of new capacities students have actually gained our institutions

Components of Core Commitments Initiative

- Mobilize Presidential Leadership
- Identify a Leadership Consortium of Colleges and Universities
- Generate a Widespread National Conversation
- Expand the Network of Faculty, Staff, and Student Advocates
- Measure Progress in Student Learning

Personal and Social Responsibility Institutional Inventory

- A new AAC&U instrument to determine where people perceive PSR education resides
- Used with pre- and post-survey dialogues across campus constituent
- Inventory surveys four different groups: students, faculty, student affairs staff, and academic administrators
- Illuminates congruences/dissonances across groups and campus dimensions

Core Commitments Strategy

■ Research

■ Practices

■ Resources

...are vehicles for...

COLLECTING

DISSEMINATING

AMPLIFYING

...EVIDENCE of
PSR Learning

■ Conferences/Events

■ Publicity/Press