



Association
of American
Colleges and
Universities

“If the American economy is to recover from the Great Recession—and I believe that it can—it will be because of a ready supply of workers with the critical thinking, creative problem solving, technological and communication skills needed to fuel productivity and growth.”

—Norm Augustine, former Chairman and CEO, Lockheed Martin

LEAP Employer-Educator Compact



MAKING QUALITY A PRIORITY AS AMERICANS GO TO COLLEGE



A LEAP Presidents' Trust Initiative



Liberal Education & America's Promise

The LEAP Employer-Educator Compact

As leaders of higher education institutions and of companies and organizations that employ college graduates, we are coming together in a compact to put the quality of college learning at the top of national, regional, state, and institutional agendas—for the benefit of our students, our economy, and our democracy. We are launching this LEAP Employer-Educator Compact because we are alarmed that, even as the world around us is changing dramatically, the United States is falling short in providing today’s students with the broad knowledge and high-level capacities that they will need both to navigate a fast-paced economy and to contribute to the future of our democracy.

Recently, public policy at all levels has focused with new intensity on college preparation, access, completion, and cost reduction—and we strongly support those commitments. But, as employers and educators, we know that too many students leave college still lacking crucial capacities that they—and society—urgently need.

The quality of student learning in college is fundamental to America’s future—and ensuring high-quality learning is the goal of this Employer-Educator Compact. Through this Compact, we are determined to focus with new intensity on:

- 1) the learning college students most need both for the economy and for democracy;
- 2) 21st-century designs for high-quality, hands-on learning that prepare students to deal with complexity, diversity, and change; and
- 3) the development of meaningful evidence about students’ actual achievement in college.



High-Quality Learning Involves More than a Major

Above and beyond what students learn in their major fields—chemists must know chemistry and engineers must know engineering—a high-quality college education for the 21st century also should emphasize:

- **BROAD LEARNING** about science, society, technology, human diversity, and global cultures and interdependence;
- **INTELLECTUAL SKILLS** that support evidence-based reasoning and innovation—including analysis, communication, critical and creative thinking, quantitative fluency, information literacy, and collaborative problem solving;
- **PERSONAL AND SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY**, including ethical reasoning, civic and democratic knowledge and engagement, global acumen, and the capacity to work productively with diverse people and perspectives;
- **INTEGRATIVE AND ADAPTIVE LEARNING**, including the demonstrated ability to apply knowledge, skills, and responsibilities to complex problems and new settings.

Preparing All Students for Success

The high-quality learning we seek is best described as a liberal—and liberating—education. In the 21st century, the hallmark capacities of a liberally educated graduate (see previous page) are important in every area of endeavor and indispensable to success in the economy. These forms of learning can and should be fostered in all colleges, universities, and community colleges, and across all areas of study, including career and technical fields, professional fields, and the liberal arts and sciences. Combined with strong in-depth study in a major field, high-level achievement in these cross-cutting areas of knowledge and skill is the best possible preparation both for the economy and for democracy.

“The quality of individuals’ actual learning is the most important resource we have as a society.... In today’s far more competitive global environment, we must work together toward standards that, once and for all, make excellence truly inclusive.... Quality must drive our commitment to college completion, both for the economy and for the future of our democracy.”

—The Quality Imperative, AAC&U Board of Directors (2010)

Our Shared Commitments

We pledge to:

- 1) Help Americans understand that the rising demands of a global workplace require that every college student acquire the hallmark outcomes of a 21st-century liberal education (see previous page);
- 2) Ensure that all college students—whatever their chosen field of study or ambitions—have access to educational experiences that lead to achievement of the broad learning and intellectual skills they need for success;
- 3) Highlight, support, and expand 21st-century designs for high-quality, hands-on learning, including senior projects, undergraduate research, internships, global and community-based projects and experiences, and other experiential learning programs;
- 4) Prioritize and advance the dual mission for higher education to prepare students both for successful careers and for civic responsibility—providing them with the knowledge and skills required in a great democracy and as responsible employees;
- 5) Document national and institutional progress in helping all students achieve the learning they need—with particular attention to their ability to integrate and apply their learning to complex problems and projects.

Pursuing these shared goals together, we pledge to support programs that prepare students to deal with complexity and to speak out in one voice about making the quality of student learning the touchstone priority for public policy and institutional practice. We urge other college and university presidents and leaders in business, industry, and nonprofit organizations to join us in this Compact.

What Employers Say:

- **Innovation a Priority:** 95% of employers say they give hiring preference to college graduates with skills that enable them to contribute to innovation in the workplace.
- **It Takes More than a Major:** 93% of employers say that a demonstrated capacity to think critically, communicate clearly, and solve complex problems is more important than a candidate's undergraduate major. More than 75% want higher education to place more emphasis on: critical thinking, complex problem solving, written and oral communication, and applied knowledge.
- **Broad Learning is Expected:** 80% of employers agree that, regardless of their major, all college students should acquire broad knowledge in the liberal arts and sciences.
- **Students Need Liberal and Applied Learning:** Employers strongly endorse educational practices that involve students in active, effortful work—practices including collaborative problem solving, research, internships, senior projects, and community engagements.
- **E-Portfolios Would Add Value:** 80% of employers say an electronic portfolio would be useful to ensure that job applicants have the knowledge and skills they need to succeed.

Employer Priorities and Consensus on College Learning Outcomes

Knowledge of Human Cultures and the Physical and Natural World

- Civic knowledge, skills, and judgment essential for contributing to the community and to our democratic society 82% ▲
- Broad knowledge in the liberal arts and sciences 80% ▲
- Global issues and knowledge about societies and cultures outside the US 78% ▲
- Knowledge about science and technology 56% ❖

Intellectual and Practical Skills

- Critical thinking and analytic reasoning 82% ❖
- Complex problem solving 81% ❖
- Written and oral communication 80% ❖
- Information literacy 72% ❖
- Innovation and creativity 71% ❖
- Teamwork skills in diverse groups 67% ❖
- Quantitative reasoning 55% ❖

Personal and Social Responsibility

- Problem solving in diverse settings 91% ▲
- Ethical issues/public debates important in their field 87% ▲
- Ethical decision-making 64% ❖

Integrative and Applied Learning

- Direct experiences with community problem solving 86% ▲
- Applied knowledge in real-world settings 78% ❖

NOTE:

▲ indicates percentage of employers who “strongly agree” or “somewhat agree” that, “regardless of a student’s chosen field of study,” every student should attain this area of knowledge or skill.

❖ indicates percentage of employers who say they want colleges and universities to “place more emphasis” on this area of knowledge or skill.

Source: Hart Research Associates, *It Takes More than a Major: Employer Priorities for College Learning and Student Success* (Washington, DC: Association of American Colleges and Universities, 2013)

For information on the LEAP Employer-Educator Compact and ways to get involved, see <http://www.aacu.org/leap/presidentstrust/compact>



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