A 21st Century Framework for Quality College Learning Already Exists
Our Challenge is to Connect Aspirations with Practice and Demonstrated Achievement

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Association of American Colleges & Universities

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For the “Quality in the Undergraduate Experience” convening at the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine

The Quality Context: Preparing All Students for Work, Life, and Civic Participation

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Policy Focus: Persistence and Pocketbook – with Learning Left Off the Table Entirely

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“In order to prepare young people to do the jobs computers cannot do we must re-focus our education system around one objective: giving students the foundational skills in problem-solving and communication that computers don’t have....[T]hese skills are not just the skills of professionals with advanced degrees. What computers have done is to make even traditional blue collar jobs like auto-mechanic—dependent upon one’s ability to problem solve and to communicate.” - Dancing with Robots: Human Skills for Computerized Work (Emphasis added by AAC&U)

Employers Seek Graduates Who Can Deal with Complexity

★ 93% of employers say that candidates’ demonstrated capacity to think critically, communicate clearly, and solve complex problems is more important than their undergraduate major

★ 93% of employers say that they are “asking employees to take on more responsibilities and to use a broader set of skills than in the past.”

★ 92% of employers say that “innovation is essential to our company’s continued success.”

★ 95% of employers agree that their companies put a priority on hiring people with the intellectual and interpersonal skills to help them contribute to innovation in the workplace

★ 91% of employers say that “the challenges their employees face are more complex than they were in the past.”

★ 91% of employers say that, whatever their major, all students should have experiences in solving problems with colleagues whose views are different from their own
Too Few Low-Income Students Complete College

While postsecondary institutions are becoming more diverse, the degree attainment gap for low-income individuals is widening. In 2013, individuals from high-income families were eight times more likely to earn a bachelor’s degree by age twenty-four than were those from low-income families. In 1970, the high-income individuals were more than six times more likely to earn a bachelor’s degree. In the intervening 43 years, bachelor degree attainment among those from wealthy families nearly doubled while it barely moved for those in the poorest families.

Higher-income students are more likely to earn degrees

BACHELOR’S DEGREE ATTAINMENT BY AGE TWENTY-FOUR FOR DEPENDENT FAMILY MEMBERS BY FAMILY INCOME QUARTILE


For more information, see Step Up and Lead for Equity: What Higher Education Can Do to Reverse our Deepening Divides (AAC&U, 2015).
### Top Learning Outcomes for All College Students

#### Knowledge of Human Cultures and the Physical and Natural World

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>2009</th>
<th>2015</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Humanities</td>
<td>92%</td>
<td>92%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sciences</td>
<td>91%</td>
<td>92%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Sciences</td>
<td>90%</td>
<td>89%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Global/World Cultures</td>
<td>87%</td>
<td>89%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mathematics</td>
<td>87%</td>
<td>92%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diversity in the United States</td>
<td>73%</td>
<td>73%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Intellectual and Practical Skills

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>2009</th>
<th>2015</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Writing Skills</td>
<td>99%</td>
<td>99%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Critical Thinking</td>
<td>95%</td>
<td>98%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quantitative Reasoning</td>
<td>91%</td>
<td>94%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oral Communication</td>
<td>88%</td>
<td>82%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intercultural Skills</td>
<td>79%*</td>
<td>79%*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information Literacy</td>
<td>76%</td>
<td>76%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Skills</td>
<td>65%</td>
<td>75%</td>
</tr>
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</table>

#### Personal and Social Responsibility

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>2009</th>
<th>2015</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Intercultural Skills</td>
<td>79%*</td>
<td>79%*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethical Reasoning</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>75%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Civic Engagement</td>
<td>68%</td>
<td>63%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Integrative Learning

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>2009</th>
<th>2015</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Application of Learning</td>
<td>66%</td>
<td>65%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Integration of Learning</td>
<td>63%</td>
<td>68%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: In 2015, 85% of AAC&U member institutions surveyed reported that they had a common set of learning outcomes for all students. This percentage was up from 78% who reported this in the earlier 2009 study. Percentages cited above include those outcomes for which 2/3 or more of those with campus-wide goals report that this outcome is one of the learning goals they have for all students. The four categories of learning outcomes correspond to a set of “Essential Learning Outcomes” developed as part of AAC&U’s LEAP initiative. See www.aacu.org/leap. For 2009 findings, see Learning and Assessment: Trends in Undergraduate Education—A Survey Among Members of the Association of American Colleges and Universities (AAC&U and Hart Research Associates, 2009). For 2015 findings, see National Trends in General Education Design, Learning Outcomes, and Teaching Approaches (AAC&U and Hart Research Associates, forthcoming January 2016). AAC&U’s 1350 institutional members represent the entire spectrum of regionally accredited postsecondary institutions. Member institutions are half public, half private, and include two-year and four-year institutions, liberal arts colleges, comprehensive institutions, and research universities, both public and private.

* The starred items are shown in two learning outcome categories because they apply to both.
Employer Priorities for Most Important College Learning Outcomes

Knowledge of Human Cultures and the Physical and Natural World

• Broad knowledge in the liberal arts and sciences 78%
• Knowledge and understanding of democratic institutions and values 87%
• Intercultural skills and understanding of societies and cultures outside the US 78%

Intellectual and Practical Skills

• Oral communication 85%
• Teamwork skills in diverse groups 83%
• Written communication 82%
• Critical thinking and analytic reasoning 81%
• Complex problem solving 70%
• Information literacy 68%
• Innovation and creativity 65%
• Technological skills 60%
• Quantitative reasoning 56%

Personal and Social Responsibility

• Problem solving in diverse settings 96%
• Civic knowledge, skills, and judgment essential for contributing to the community and to our democratic society 86%
• Ethical judgment and decision making 81%

Integrative and Applied Learning

• Applied knowledge in real-world settings 80%

Note: These data are taken from Falling Short? College Learning and Career Success, a 2015 report on findings from a survey of employers and a survey of college students conducted for AAC&U by Hart Research Associates. For a full report on this survey and earlier reports on employer views, see www.aacu.org/leap.

■ 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 rate this outcome as very important (8-10 on a 10 point scale) for recent graduates entering the job market.
High-Impact Educational Practices

These widely tested teaching and learning innovations show substantial educational benefits, especially for college students from historically underserved backgrounds. But these practices remain optional rather than expected on most campuses.

First-Year Seminars and Experiences
Many schools now build into the curriculum first-year seminars or other programs that bring small groups of students together with faculty or staff on a regular basis. The highest-quality first-year experiences place a strong emphasis on critical inquiry, frequent writing, information literacy, collaborative learning, and other skills that develop students’ intellectual and practical competencies. First-year seminars can also involve students with cutting-edge questions in scholarship and with faculty members’ own research.

Common Intellectual Experiences
The older idea of a “core” curriculum has evolved into a variety of modern forms, such as a set of required common courses or a vertically organized general education program that includes advanced integrative studies and/or required participation in a learning community (see below). These programs often combine broad themes—e.g., technology and society, global interdependence—with a variety of curricular and cocurricular options for students.

Learning Communities
The key goals for learning communities are to encourage integration of learning across courses and to involve students with “big questions” that matter beyond the classroom. Students take two or more linked courses as a group and work closely with one another and with their professors. Many learning communities explore a common topic and/or common readings through the lenses of different disciplines. Some deliberately link “liberal arts” and “professional courses”; others feature service learning.

Writing-Intensive Courses
These courses emphasize writing at all levels of instruction and across the curriculum, including final-year projects. Students are encouraged to produce and revise various forms of writing for different audiences in different disciplines. The effectiveness of this repeated practice “across the curriculum” has led to parallel efforts in such areas as quantitative reasoning, oral communication, information literacy, and, on some campuses, ethical inquiry.

Collaborative Assignments and Projects
Collaborative learning combines two key goals: learning to work and solve problems in the company of others, and sharpening one’s own understanding by listening seriously to the insights of others, especially those with different backgrounds and life experiences. Approaches range from study groups within a course, to team-based assignments and writing, to cooperative projects and research.

Undergraduate Research
Many colleges and universities are now providing research experiences for students in all disciplines. Undergraduate research, however, has been most prominently used in science disciplines. With strong support from the National Science Foundation and the research community, scientists are reshaping their courses to connect key concepts and questions with students’ early and active involvement in systematic investigation and research. The goal is to involve students with actively contested questions, empirical observation, cutting-edge technologies, and the sense of excitement that comes from working to answer important questions.

Diversity/Global Learning
Many colleges and universities now emphasize courses and programs that help students explore cultures, life experiences, and worldviews different from their own. These studies—which may address U.S. diversity, world cultures, or both—often explore “difficult differences” such as racial, ethnic, and gender inequality, or continuing struggles around the globe for human rights, freedom, and power. Frequently, intercultural studies are augmented by experiential learning in the community and/or by study abroad.

Service Learning, Community-Based Learning
In these programs, field-based “experiential learning” with community partners is an instructional strategy—and often a required part of the course. The idea is to give students direct experience with issues they are studying in the curriculum and with ongoing efforts to analyze and solve problems in the community. A key element in these programs is the opportunity students have to both apply what they are learning in real-world settings and reflect in a classroom setting on their service experiences. These programs model the idea that giving something back to the community is an important college outcome, and that working with community partners is good preparation for citizenship, work, and life.

Internships
Internships are another increasingly common form of experiential learning. The idea is to provide students with direct experience in a work setting—usually related to their career interests—and to give them the benefit of supervision and coaching from professionals in the field. If the internship is taken for course credit, students complete a project or paper that is approved by a faculty member.

Capstone Courses and Projects
Whether they’re called “senior capstones” or some other name, these culminating experiences require students nearing the end of their college years to create a project of some sort that integrates and applies what they’ve learned. The project might be a research paper, a performance, a portfolio of “best work,” or an exhibit of artwork. Capstones are offered both in departmental programs and, increasingly, in general education as well.

Impact of Participation in High Impact Practices on Percentage of Senior NSSE Respondents Graduating on Time by Racial & Ethnic Background

Source: Does Participation in Multiple High Impact Practices Affect Student Success at Cal State Northridge? by Bettina Huber (unpublished paper on California State University, Northridge students, 2010).

Relationships between Selected High-Impact Activities, Deep Learning, and Self-Reported Gains

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Deep Learning</th>
<th>Gains: General</th>
<th>Gains: Personal</th>
<th>Gains: Practical</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>First-Year</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning Communities</td>
<td>+++</td>
<td>++</td>
<td>++</td>
<td>++</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Service Learning</td>
<td>+++</td>
<td>++</td>
<td>+++</td>
<td>+++</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Senior</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Study Abroad</td>
<td>++</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student–Faculty Research</td>
<td>+++</td>
<td>++</td>
<td>++</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internships</td>
<td>++</td>
<td>++</td>
<td>++</td>
<td>++</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Service Learning</td>
<td>+++</td>
<td>++</td>
<td>+++</td>
<td>++</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senior Culminating Experience</td>
<td>+++</td>
<td>++</td>
<td>++</td>
<td>++</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Degree Qualifications Profile Overview

*A template of proficiencies required for the award of college degrees at the associate, bachelor’s, and master’s levels

Knowledge

At each degree level, every college student should demonstrate proficiency in using both specialized knowledge from at least one field and broad, integrative knowledge from arts and sciences fields. Both kinds of knowledge should be pursued from first to final year, providing opportunities for integration across fields and application to complex problems—in the student’s area of emphasis, in out-of-school settings, and in civil society.

BROAD AND INTEGRATIVE KNOWLEDGE

Key areas include the sciences, social sciences, humanities, arts, and global, intercultural, and democratic learning.

In each area, students:

- Learn key concepts and methods of inquiry
- Examine significant debates and questions
- Make evidence-based arguments

In addition, at each degree level, students:

- Produce work that integrates concepts and methods from at least two fields

SPECIALIZED KNOWLEDGE

Students demonstrate depth of knowledge in a field and produce field-appropriate applications drawing on both major field and, at the BA level and beyond, other fields. Students learn

- Discipline and field-specific knowledge
- Purposes, methods, and limitations of field
- Applied skills in field
- Integrative skills and methods that draw from multiple fields and disciplines

Intellectual Skills

Students hone and integrate intellectual skills across the curriculum, applying those skills both to complex challenges within major fields and to broad, integrative problem-solving challenges in general education, and in civic, global, and applied learning. Skills include

- Analytic inquiry
- Use of information resources
- Engaging diverse perspectives

- Ethical reasoning
- Quantitative fluency
- Communication fluency

Civic and Global Learning

Students acquire knowledge required for responsible citizenship both from their formal studies (see knowledge and skills, above) and from community-based learning, and demonstrate their ability to integrate both forms of learning in analyzing and addressing significant public problems and questions, both in civic and global contexts. Civic learning may be demonstrated through research, collaborative projects and/or field-based assignments.

Applied and Collaborative Learning

Students demonstrate their ability to integrate and apply their learning (see knowledge and skills, above) in complex projects and assignments, including collaborative efforts, that may include research, projects, practicums, internships, work assignments, performances, and creative tasks.

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*This chart summarizes Lumina Foundation’s Degree Qualifications Profile, first released in 2014. This edition is informed by feedback from faculty and leaders from hundreds of colleges, universities, and community colleges that worked with the “beta version” of the document, which was published in 2011. The full Degree Qualifications Profile is available for download at http://www.luminafoundation.org/publications/The_Degree_Qualifications_PROFILE.pdf.
Intellectual skills should be practiced across the educational experience and demonstrated in the context of both broad and specialized studies; in civic and global learning; and in applied and collaborative learning. This matrix suggests how a focus on students’ effortful practice can be used for assignment planning and for assessment. To complete the matrix, program faculty should decide where and how in their programs students will practice key intellectual skills and take part in applied learning tasks and assignments—an exercise that should also inform curriculum development, improvement, and assessment, including prior learning assessment.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Intellectual Skills</th>
<th>DEGREE-LEVEL PROFICIENCIES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Specialized Knowledge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Analytic Inquiry</td>
<td>Broad and Integrative Knowledge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use of information resources</td>
<td>Civic and Global Learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engaging diverse perspectives</td>
<td>Applied and Collaborative Learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethical reasoning</td>
<td>Institution-Specific Emphases°</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quantitative fluency</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communicative fluency</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Program-specific intellectual skills</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

° E.g., religious, artistic, technological, scientific, etc.

Adapted from: The Degree Qualifications Profile, pages 22-23 (released by Lumina Foundation, October 2014).
Employers give college graduates low scores for preparedness across learning outcomes.

VALUE: Toward Meaningful Assessment of Student Learning

VALUE (Valid Assessment of Learning in Undergraduate Education) is a campus-based assessment initiative sponsored by AAC&U as part of its Liberal Education and America’s Promise (LEAP) initiative. VALUE rubrics or scoring guides provide needed tools to assess students’ own authentic work, produced across their diverse learning progressions and institutions, to determine whether and how well students are meeting graduation level achievement in learning outcomes that both employers and faculty consider essential.

Teams of faculty and other educational professionals from institutions across the country—two- and four-year, private and public, research and liberal arts, large and small—developed rubrics for sixteen Essential Learning Outcomes that all students need for success in work, citizenship, and life. The VALUE rubrics are being used to help institutions demonstrate, share, and assess student accomplishment of progressively more advanced and integrative learning.

Since their release in the fall of 2009, the rubrics have become a widely referenced and utilized form of assessment on campuses across the United States and internationally. As of December 2015, the rubrics have been accessed by more than 42,000 individuals from more than 4,200 unique institutions, including more than 2,800 colleges and universities. The VALUE rubrics have also been approved for use in meeting national standards for accountability established by the Voluntary System of Accountability (VSA).

The VALUE rubrics include Inquiry and Analysis, Critical Thinking, Creative Thinking, Written Communication, Oral Communication, Quantitative Literacy, Information Literacy, Reading, Teamwork, Problem Solving, Civic Knowledge and Engagement – Local and Global, Intercultural Knowledge and Competence, Ethical Reasoning and Action, Global Learning, Foundations and Skills for Lifelong Learning, and Integrative Learning.

Sample of VALUE Rubric: Integrative Learning

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Selected Dimensions – Capstone Level</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Connections to Experience</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>connects relevant experience and academic knowledge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Connections to Discipline</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sees (makes) connections across disciplines, perspectives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Transfer</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>adapts and applies skills, abilities, theories, or methodologies gained in one situation to new situations</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: AAC&U has secured grant support for three coordinated “proof-of-concept” studies that use VALUE rubrics, trained faculty assessors, and samples of student work collected following common protocols, to evaluate students’ proficiency levels on specific college learning outcomes. The largest study, called the VALUE Multistate Collaborative, is co-led by AAC&U and State Higher Education Executive Officers (SHEEO) in 2015 and 2016. Involving 12 state systems, and 100 two-and four-year institutions, this study is funded by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. A second study, supported by a Spencer Foundation grant to AAC&U, includes ten private and public institutions in Minnesota. The third study is supported by a Sherman Fairchild Foundation grant to AAC&U to work with nine liberal arts colleges that are part of the Great Lakes Colleges Association (GLCA).
First Results from the VALUE/Multi-State Proof of Concept Study on Two- and Four-Year Students’ Achievement Levels in Selected Essential Learning Outcomes

Note: These findings are based on faculty members’ assessments of students’ performance levels using over 7,000 assignments completed by students to fulfill course requirements in a broad array of courses. Faculty were trained to use AAC&U’s LEAP VALUE Rubrics (which were created by faculty teams and validated in earlier studies). The scoring for this study was blind, and no faculty member scored work for his/her home institution. The first set of findings is based on samples of student work from sophomores at 30 public, two-year institutions, and the second set of findings is based on samples of student work from seniors at 29 public, four-year institutions.

Findings from the first graph are taken from 30 public community colleges; findings from the second graph are taken from 29 public, four-year institutions. 47% of students whose work was assessed were Pell-eligible.
Findings from the first graph are taken from 30 public community colleges; findings from the second graph are taken from 29 public, four-year institutions. 47% of students whose work was assessed were Pell-eligible.
THE LEAP CHALLENGE:  
MAKE APPLIED OR “SIGNATURE WORK” A GOAL FOR ALL STUDENTS—
AND THE EXPECTED STANDARD FOR QUALITY LEARNING IN COLLEGE

**Definition:** Signature Work describes students’ learning related to a problem or project over at least a semester and often longer. It may include work in and across thematically linked courses, research, practicums, community service, or other experiential learning. It will always include writing and reflection of multiple kinds. The key idea is that the student takes the lead, with faculty and mentors, in pursuing a significant question and in producing work that expresses the insights and learning gained from the inquiry. Signature Work will show, in sum, what students can do with their learning.

A second key idea is that students need frequent practice to prepare for signature work.

**Rationale:** As educators, we are preparing students both for an economy that is fueled by successful innovation and for life in diverse communities that urgently need solutions to festering problems on every level: from human dignity and well-being to long-term issues of environmental sustainability. In this context, higher education should help graduates develop the capacities—including investigation, evidence-based reasoning, social imagination, collaborative competence—to grapple with problems where the “right answer” is still unknown and where any answer may be actively contested.

We also are preparing students to navigate in a context of ongoing and often disruptive change, in which their own inner resources – e.g., their sense of purpose, motivation, ethical compass, resilience, and grit—will be important components in their achievement of “success,” in all its multiple manifestations.

To prepare students for a lifetime of working with unscripted questions—in their careers, in diverse communities, and in their own lives—college study should immerse them—early and often—in their own explorations of significant and complex problems, questions that matter to them and whose significance to others they are prepared to explain. In exploring these significant questions and problems, students should, with guidance from faculty, take the lead in framing the question, exploring the options, engaging diverse views, and producing visible results—whether through research, writing, practicums, service, social media, e-portfolios, or other forms of invention and problem-solving.

**The LEAP Challenge in Brief:** Educational institutions should expect and prepare students to produce “signature work” on one or more problems that matter to the students and matter to society. The problems may be contemporary—issues that need to be solved in a timely and practical way, or they may be enduring and/or personal—issues of values, identity, integrity, spiritual quests, justice, obligations to self and others.

What matters is that each student is expected to devote time and talent to significant explorations—enacted across multiple courses and/or assignments—and to produce signature work as a degree requirement.

Students’ signature work can be assessed for evidence of their proficiency on key learning outcomes. The purpose of signature work is much more than assessment. The goal is tapping students’ own motivations—which begin with their own questions and priorities—kindling imagination, making higher learning really matter, and providing opportunities for learning-in-depth that go well beyond the traditional compilation of course credits, grades, transcripts and credentials.

For more information, please see [www.aacu.org/leap/challenge](http://www.aacu.org/leap/challenge) and the “AAC&U Centennial Video” on YouTube. See also: Carol Geary Schneider, “Foreword,” General Education Maps and Markers (AAC&U, 2015) and “The LEAP Challenge: Transforming for Students, Essential for Liberal Education,” which appears in the Winter/Spring 2015 issue of Liberal Education.
Designing Guided Learning Pathways for Quality and Inclusive Excellence

*With Equity and Belonging Paramount Values, Institutions Meld High Touch and High Tech to Support and Monitor Student Engagement and Progress, Giving Special Attention to Frequent or Systemic Barriers and Challenges*

Build an intentional and welcoming community so that every student feels known, respected, supported and savvy about where to find help

High touch: provide mentoring and individualized degree plans to connect degree program pathways (and developmental education, if needed) with students’ own goals, lives, and emerging interests

High tech: deploy data analytics to provide timely information about student progress and problems, and to address systemic disparities or barriers

*Faculty Define and Programs Address Essential Learning Outcomes – Across Systems and Within Institutions*

Enable a constant curricular and co-curricular focus on the most important purposes of college learning—preparing students to tackle complex questions, economic, democratic, and personal

*Sequence Programs, Courses and Well-Designed Assignments to Foster Essential Learning Outcomes*

Use the DQP Matrix to map Essential Learning Outcomes across all courses and requirements in the program, at progressively more challenging levels from initial courses to final studies

Connect the curriculum visibly with the wider world and students’ own questions, while providing clarity, direction and progress points or “markers” for students

Provide multiple on-ramps for students in transition and/or who need supplemental work

Where relevant, use digital tools to free time for student/faculty work on projects

*All Students Participate Frequently in High Impact or Active Learning Practices, From First to Final Year*

Shift the focus from passive listening and rote assessments to students’ own *effortful engagement* with questions, problems, and projects, including community- or work-based projects

Ensure students’ *constant practice* of essential learning outcomes such as analytic inquiry, engaging diverse perspectives, collaborative problem-solving, ethical inquiry, quantitative reasoning, information literacy, communication skills, etc.

*Every Student Completes Applied Learning Projects—Connected to Program and Student Goals*

Connect college learning with unscripted questions important to the student

Prepare and enable students to become self-directed learners

Embrace AAC&U’s LEAP Challenge: which invites higher education to make students’ “signature work” a catalyst for their integrative and applied learning

*Students’ Own Work—including Their Applied Learning Projects—Provides the Primary Evidence of their Progress Toward Degree Level Learning and Educational Achievement*

Reduce the emphasis on assessments that are disconnected by design from the actual program of study; shift our focus to students’ own “best work.” [Use AAC&U’s LEAP VALUE rubrics to track student progress on key learning outcomes and monitor equity of learning (see www.aacu.org/VALUE)]

AAC&U, 2015
Proposed Quality Indicators Framework

Data and analysis can be generated and summarized at both institutional and program levels—aligned with institutional context, mission, and setting (e.g. internal reports and/or external reporting via program review, system-level reports, accreditation self-studies, etc.). This framework could be a guide for data collection and reporting that would supplement other sources of data already being reported on retention, completion, time-to-degree, etc.

Degree Learning Outcomes (Defined by Faculty—Endorsed by Employers; Aligned with Programs)

- **Institutional Learning Outcomes**—knowledge, intellectual skills, and applications aligned to DQP/LEAP learning outcomes (or similar frameworks such as Wisconsin’s shared learning goals) and defined at associate and baccalaureate levels.
  - Degree-level outcomes articulated for each campus and/or system AND degree of alignment of programs, requirements and assignments with key outcomes.
  - Alignment data might include: numbers of programs that have mapped key learning outcomes to program requirements and courses; programs using signature assignments to provide evidence of students’ achievement; presence of capstone or other projects showing students’ cumulative gains and proficiency levels.
  - Evidence of degree of qualified faculty engagement with design, alignment, and assessment of intended learning outcomes, and with students.

Educational Practices That Foster Student Development of Learning Outcomes

- **High-Impact Practices**—frequency of student participation in practices that challenge graduates to grapple with complex challenges (e.g., writing-intensive courses, research, internships, service learning, work-based learning, collaborative initiatives, capstone projects.)
  - System or institution reports on percentage of students engaged in selected HIPs; percentage of students engaged in 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 or more HIPs; percentage of first-generation and/or minority students in key HIPs. (Note: NSSE data show first-generation students average 1.24 HIPS.)

- **Faculty Engagement and Time on Task**—results of National Survey of Student Engagement, Community College Survey of Student Engagement surveys—measuring student engagement in activities and behaviors (e.g. engagement with faculty and peers) that correlate with deep learning.

Achievement/Performance Metrics

- **Student Achievement Levels as Evidenced in Student Work**—evidence of students’ achievement of key learning outcomes as demonstrated in student work and measured by faculty (e.g. using nationally validated VALUE Rubrics to discern evidence of students’ achievement of graduation level of proficiency. (Note: VALUE rubrics cover a range of DQP/LEAP outcome areas and already are being used on more than 2800 U.S. campuses (2-year and 4-year).
  - Institutions and/or systems report on % of students who achieve degree-level proficiency on key learning outcomes.

Equity

- **Student Practice and Achievement reported with disaggregated data** to reveal potential gaps in participation in “high impact practices” and/or achievement levels on key outcomes.

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