In this course, I knew the purpose of each assignment.
- Each assignment included a section that explained how the assignment was related to the objectives of the course.
- In this course, I knew the steps required to complete my assignments.
- Coursework and course activities benefited my learning.
- My instructor provided tools I could use to assess the quality of my and others’ work.

While all students in the aggregate in the more transparent courses reported an increase in their mastery of the skills that employers value most (Hart Associates 2015, 2013), these were the specific skills for which underserved students in our study noticed the greatest increases:
- connecting information from a variety of sources;
- learning on your own;
- applying knowledge and skills to different contexts;
- writing effectively;
- judging the reliability of information from various sources;
- considering opinions or points of view different from your own;
- judging the strengths and weaknesses of ideas.

In science, technology, engineering, and mathematics courses that offered more transparency, there were small increases to students’ academic confidence and their sense of belonging, in comparison with the less transparent courses in these disciplines (fig. 8). In more transparent humanities, arts, and social science courses, students experienced medium effect size increases in the skills valued by employers, as well as small-to-medium effect size increases to their academic confidence and sense of belonging, in comparison with the courses that offered less transparency in these disciplines (fig. 9).

Students’ short-term retention rates in the more transparent courses were slightly higher than those of students in the less...