Integrative Liberal Learning through Guided Pathways for Student Success

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Critical Questions

• How are institutions preparing all students for the kinds of challenges they will confront in life, work and citizenship, both U.S. and global?

• How can we help students to integrate and apply their knowledge and skills to complex, unscripted problems and new settings?
Falling Short?
College Learning and Career Success

Key findings from survey among 400 employers and 613 college students conducted in November and December 2014
For
The Association of American Colleges and Universities by

Hart Research Associates
Methodology

- Online survey among 400 executives at private-sector and nonprofit organizations that have 25 or more employees
  - Each reports that 25% or more of their new hires hold an associate degree from a two-year college or a bachelor’s degree from a four-year college

- Online survey among 613 college students, all within a year of obtaining a degree or, in the case of two-year students, transferring to a four-year college
  - Sample includes 304 students at four-year public colleges, 151 students at four-year private colleges, and 158 students at two-year colleges
Employers are in broad agreement on college learning outcomes for all students, regardless of their chosen field of study.

### Employers’ Agreement with Statements about College Learning Aims Regardless of Student’s Chosen Field of Study

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Somewhat Agree</th>
<th>Students/Total Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>All college students should have educational experiences that teach them how to solve problems with people whose views are different from their own</td>
<td>59%</td>
<td>96%</td>
<td>94%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All college students should gain an understanding of democratic institutions and values</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>87%</td>
<td>85%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Every college student should take courses that build the civic knowledge, skills, and judgment essential for contributing to our democratic society</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>86%</td>
<td>86%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Every college student should acquire broad knowledge in the liberal arts and sciences</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>78%</td>
<td>83%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All college students should gain intercultural skills and an understanding of societies and countries outside the United States</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>78%</td>
<td>87%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Learning Outcomes that at Least Four in Five Employers Rate as Very Important

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Skill/Knowledge Area</th>
<th>Proportion of Employers</th>
<th>Proportion of Students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Oral communication</td>
<td>85%</td>
<td>78%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working effectively with others in teams</td>
<td>83%</td>
<td>77%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Written communication</td>
<td>82%</td>
<td>75%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethical judgment and decision-making</td>
<td>81%</td>
<td>74%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Critical/analytical thinking</td>
<td>81%</td>
<td>79%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Applying knowledge/skills to real world</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>79%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*8, 9, 10 ratings on zero-to-10 scale, 10 = very important
# Learning Outcomes that More than Half of Employers Rate as Very Important

*Proportions of employers rating each skill/knowledge area as very important for recent college graduates to have*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Skill/Knowledge Area</th>
<th>Proportion of Employers</th>
<th>Proportion of Students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Analyzing/solving complex problems</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>73%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Locating, organizing, evaluating information</td>
<td>68%</td>
<td>73%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Being innovative/creative</td>
<td>65%</td>
<td>69%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staying current on technologies</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>68%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working with numbers/statistics</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>55%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Analyzing/solving problems with people from different backgrounds</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>71%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*8, 9, 10 ratings on zero-to-10 scale, 10 = very important*
Employers perceive great value in students’ completing **applied learning projects**, but see room to improve college students’ preparedness to complete applied learning projects.

- 88% think that it is important for colleges to ensure that ALL students are prepared with the skills/knowledge needed to complete a significant applied learning project.
  - BUT just 14% of employers think that most college students are prepared with the skills/knowledge needed to complete a significant applied learning project.

- 80% say that it is very important for recent graduates to demonstrate the ability to apply learning in real-world settings.
  - BUT only 23% of employers think that recent college graduates are very well prepared to apply knowledge and skills in real-world settings.

- 60% believe that ALL college students should be expected to complete a significant applied learning project before graduating.
Employers see benefits to requiring students to complete a significant applied learning project.

In order to graduate, some colleges and many departments require students to complete a significant project, such as a research project, collaborative project, or some other project, in which they apply their college learning. This applied learning project takes a semester or more to complete.

If college students were required to complete a significant applied learning project like this, how much do you think this would improve each of the following?

The quality of college graduates’ preparation for careers

- 30% Would improve this a lot
- 73%

The quality of college learning

- 28% Would improve this a lot
- 70%
Top Priorities for Improvement

*In which area do you think colleges and universities need to improve more?*

- Ensure college graduates gain knowledge and skills that apply to a specific field or position
- Equal amount of improvement needed in both areas
- Ensure graduates gain range of knowledge and skills that apply to a range of fields or positions
- Neither area needs improvement

**Employers**
- Ensure college graduates gain knowledge and skills that apply to a specific field or position: 5%
- Equal amount of improvement needed in both areas: 14%
- Ensure graduates gain range of knowledge and skills that apply to a range of fields or positions: 47%
- Neither area needs improvement: 34%

**Students**
- Ensure college graduates gain knowledge and skills that apply to a specific field or position: 17%
- Equal amount of improvement needed in both areas: 31%
- Ensure graduates gain range of knowledge and skills that apply to a range of fields or positions: 21%
- Neither area needs improvement: 31%
Employers give college graduates lower scores for preparedness across learning outcomes than current students give themselves.  

*Proportions who believe they/recent college graduates are well prepared in each area*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Employers</th>
<th>Students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Working effectively with others in teams</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>64%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staying current on technologies</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>46%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethical judgment and decision-making</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>62%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Locating, organizing, evaluating information</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>64%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Oral communication</td>
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<td>Working with numbers/statistics</td>
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<tr>
<td>Written communication</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>65%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Critical/analytical thinking</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>66%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Being innovative/creative</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>57%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*8-10 ratings on zero-to-ten scale*
Employers give college graduates lower scores for preparedness across learning outcomes than current students give themselves.

Proportions who believe they/recent college graduates are well prepared in each area:

- Analyzing/solving complex problems: Employers 24%, Students 59%
- Applying knowledge/skills to real world: Employers 23%, Students 59%
- Awareness of/experience with diverse cultures/communities in the US: Employers 21%, Students 48%
- Staying current on developments in science: Employers 21%, Students 44%
- Working with people from different backgrounds: Employers 18%, Students 55%
- Staying current on global developments/trends: Employers 18%, Students 43%
- Proficient in other language: Employers 16%, Students 34%
- Awareness of/experience with diverse cultures outside the US: Employers 15%, Students 42%

*8-10 ratings on zero-to-ten scale
Most employers say they would find e-portfolios useful.

Employers: How useful do you find/would you find this in helping you evaluate job applicants’/recent college graduates’ potential to succeed at your company?

- College transcript: Very/fairly useful 45%
- Electronic portfolio of student work: Very/fairly useful 80%

Very useful 9%

Very useful 36%
AAC&U Publications
General Education Maps and Markers

- Proficiency
- Agency and Self-Direction
- Integrative Learning & Problem-Based Inquiry
- Equity
- Transparency and Assessment
Faculty Leadership for Integrative Liberal Learning: Principles and Practices

Developing the Whole Student

**Principle:** Integrative liberal learning (ILL) develops the whole student, laying the groundwork for personal growth, economic productivity, and responsible citizenship.

**Practice:** ILL practices feature curricular designs that recognize the stages of student development and the importance of connecting and scaffolding learning experiences.
Addressing Complex Issues Through Problem-Based Inquiry

**Principle:** Integrative liberal learning (ILL) should prepare students to tackle complex and unscripted problems.

**Practice:** ILL practices emphasize a variety of student-centered and problem-based pedagogies.
Integrating Curricular, Co-Curricular, and Community Experiences

**Principle:** Integrative liberal learning (ILL) requires connections that are logical and transparent to students within and between the curriculum and the co-curriculum, and with larger communities.

**Practice:** ILL practices make explicit connections among a variety of learning practices.
Assessing and Documenting Student Learning

**Principle:** Integrative liberal learning (ILL) requires students to engage in ongoing demonstration, to others, of the gains made through curricula, programs, and the educational experience as a whole.

**Practice:** ILL practices build upon strategies that help students integrate and demonstrate their learning, reflect on their progress, and establish future goals.
LEAP Challenge

**Thematic Course Clusters**
Three or more courses across multiple disciplines, including the major field. A student examines questions important to him/her and to society.

**Thematic Course 1**

**Thematic Course 2**

**Thematic Course 3**

**Signature Work**
A student's best work, which can take many forms (e.g., capstone; internship; field work; research; community-based research)

**E-Portfolio Shows Student's Problem-Based Learning and Proficiencies Over Time**

- Diversity and global learning courses
- High-Impact Practices (HIPS)
- Courses related to major field
- Writing intensive
- Intensive in quantitative analysis
- Both writing intensive and intensive in quantitative analysis

*For students in two-year degree programs, this work is Signature Work. For students in four-year degree programs, it is preparation for Signature Work. Transfer students may take the second-year inquiry seminar at the original institution or following transfer.
Signature Work

Signature Work projects are related to a question or problem that is important to the student and important to society. Signature Work allows students to connect liberal and general learning with the world beyond college.
AAC&U’s Guided Learning Pathways

• Faculty Define and Programs Address Essential Learning Outcomes

• Sequence Programs, Courses and Well-Designed Assignments to Foster Deep Learning

• All Students Participate Frequently in HIPS, from first to final year

• Equity is a Paramount Value and Programs meld high touch and high tech to monitor and support student progress, given special attention to frequent or systemic barriers and challenges
AAC&U’s Guided Learning Pathways

• Every Student Completes an Applied Learning Project—connected to program and student goals

• Students’ Own Work Provides the Primary Evidence of Their Progress Toward Degree Level Learning and Educational Attainment
Enhancing Learning Through Practical Application

**Principle:** Integrative liberal learning (ILL) promotes adaptability, creativity, and new perspectives so students can apply their knowledge and skills to new situations.

**Practice:** ILL practices help students develop advanced skills, such as in communication, quantitative literacy, research methods, and teamwork.
“High-Impact Practices” that Help Students Achieve the Outcomes

- First-Year Seminars and Experiences
- Common Intellectual Experiences
- Learning Communities
- Writing-Intensive Courses
- Collaborative Assignments & Projects
- Undergraduate Research
- Diversity/Global Learning
- Service Learning, Community-Based Learning
- Internships
- Capstone Courses and Projects
Intentionality of HIPs

- Selection
- Design
- Access

HIPs

- Defined
- Evidence

Learning Outcomes

- Assessment
- Data Disaggregated
- Integrated

Equity
HIPs: Eight Key Elements

• Performance Expectations Set at Appropriately High Levels
• Significant Investment of Time and Effort by Students Over an Extended Period of Time
• Interactions with Faculty and Peers about Substantive Matters
• Experiences with Diversity
• Frequent, Timely and Constructive Feedback
• Structured Opportunities to reflect and Integrate Learning
• Opportunities to Discover Relevance of Learning Through Real-World Applications
• Public Demonstration of Competence

Promoting Inclusive Excellence and Equitable Outcomes

**Principle:** Integrative liberal learning (ILL) should be a powerful experience for all students across all types of institutions and modes of education.

**Practice:** ILL practices take advantage of pedagogies that are challenging, supportive, and adaptable to advance the success for diverse student populations.
“Through the vision and practice of inclusive excellence, AAC&U calls for higher education to address diversity, inclusion, and equity as critical to the wellbeing of democratic culture. Making excellence inclusive is thus an active process through which colleges and universities achieve excellence in learning, teaching, student development, institutional functioning, and engagement in local and global communities.”
Principles and Practices for Faculty Leadership

• Promoting Shared Responsibility
• Aligning Policies and Procedures
• Engaging Faculty and Staff
• Building Institutional Capacity
• Emphasizing High Levels of Student Learning
• Initiating and Sustaining Change
Thank you!

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