The LEAP Vision for Learning

Outcomes, Practices, Impact, and Employers' Views

Liberal Education & America's Promise

Excellence for Everyone as a Nation Goes to College

Association of American Colleges and Universities
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
  • Through study in the sciences and mathematics, social sciences, humanities, histories, languages, and the arts
  Focused by engagement with big questions, both contemporary and enduring

★ Intellectual and Practical Skills, including
  • Inquiry and analysis
  • Critical and creative thinking
  • Written and oral communication
  • Quantitative literacy
  • Information literacy
  • Teamwork and problem solving
  Practiced extensively, across the curriculum, in the context of progressively more challenging problems, projects, and standards for performance

★ Personal and Social Responsibility, including
  • 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

★ Integrative and Applied Learning, including
  • Synthesis and advanced accomplishment across general and specialized studies
  Demonstrated through the application of knowledge, skills, and responsibilities to new settings and complex problems

Note: The Essential Learning Outcomes were identified through a multiyear dialogue with hundreds of colleges and universities about needed goals for student learning; analysis of a long series of recommendations and reports from the business community; and analysis of the accreditation requirements for engineering, business, nursing, and teacher education. The findings are documented in previous publications of the Association of American Colleges and Universities: Greater Expectations: A New Vision for Learning as a Nation Goes to College (2002), Taking Responsibility for the Quality of the Baccalaureate Degree (2004), and Liberal Education Outcomes: A Preliminary Report on Achievement in College (2006). Liberal Education Outcomes is available online at www.aacu.org/leap.
The Principles of Excellence

Principle One

🌟 Aim High—and Make Excellence Inclusive
Make the Essential Learning Outcomes a Framework for the Entire Educational Experience, Connecting School, College, Work, and Life

Principle Two

🌟 Give Students a Compass
Focus Each Student’s Plan of Study on Achieving the Essential Learning Outcomes—and Assess Progress

Principle Three

🌟 Teach the Arts of Inquiry and Innovation
Immerse All Students in Analysis, Discovery, Problem Solving, and Communication, Beginning in School and Advancing in College

Principle Four

🌟 Engage the Big Questions
Teach through the Curriculum to Far-Reaching Issues—Contemporary and Enduring—in Science and Society, Cultures and Values, Global Interdependence, the Changing Economy, and Human Dignity and Freedom

Principle Five

🌟 Connect Knowledge with Choices and Action
Prepare Students for Citizenship and Work through Engaged and Guided Learning on “Real-World” Problems

Principle Six

🌟 Foster Civic, Intercultural, and Ethical Learning
Emphasize Personal and Social Responsibility, in Every Field of Study

Principle Seven

🌟 Assess Students’ Ability to Apply Learning to Complex Problems
Use Assessment to Deepen Learning and to Establish a Culture of Shared Purpose and Continuous Improvement
AAC&U Member Institutions' Learning Outcomes for All Students

Knowledge of Human Cultures and the Physical and Natural World

- Humanities 92%
- Sciences 91%
- Social Sciences 90%
- Global/World Cultures 87%
- Mathematics 87%
- Diversity in the United States 73%
- United States History 49%
- Languages Other Than English 42%
- Sustainability 24%

Intellectual and Practical Skills

- Writing Skills 99%
- Critical Thinking 95%
- Quantitative Reasoning 91%
- Oral Communication 88%
- Intercultural Skills 79%*
- Information Literacy 76%
- Research Skills 65%

Personal and Social Responsibility

- Intercultural Skills 79%*
- Ethical Reasoning 75%
- Civic Engagement 68%

Integrative Learning

- Application of Learning 66%
- Integration of Learning 63%

Note: Nearly 60 percent of AAC&U member institutions surveyed reported that they had a common set of learning outcomes for all students. Percentages cited above are the percentage of those with campus-wide goals reporting that this outcome is one of the learning goals they have for all students. This data was generated as part of AAC&U's initiative, Liberal Education and America's Promise (LEAP). The four categories of learning outcomes correspond to a set of "Essential Learning Outcomes" developed as part of LEAP. See www.aacu.org/leap and 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).

* The starred items are shown in two learning outcome categories because they apply to both.