General Education and Integrative Learning: Fulfilling the Promise of a 21st Century College Education

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Changing Designs for College Learning

The Nineteenth Century College

A Common Core Curriculum
(All learning is “general and liberal education”)

The Twentieth Century University

Breadth + Depth
(Breadth = General Studies; Depth = Majors; “liberal education” becomes synonymous with “general education”)

(All learning is “general and liberal education”)
Changing Designs for College Learning

The Twenty-First Century Academy

A Curriculum in Transition:
Rethinking educational purposes and practices to better prepare students for

• global interdependence
• innovation in the workplace
• diverse democracy

2005-2015 – Liberal Education and America’s Promise (LEAP)
★ Campus Action
★ Public Advocacy
★ Useful Evidence
Narrow Learning is Not Enough!
The Essential Learning Outcomes

★ Knowledge of Human Cultures and the Physical and Natural World
★ Intellectual and Practical Skills
★ Personal and Social Responsibility
★ Integrative Learning
Employers Strongly Endorse the Essential Learning Outcomes – And They Urge New Effort to Help All Students Achieve Them
But Many Students Do Not Understand the Expected Learning Outcomes

How many of your students understand your institution’s intended goals or outcomes for undergraduate learning?*

- Not many: 9%
- Some: 49%
- Almost all: 37%
- Majority: 5%

* Among members at institutions with learning outcomes for all undergraduates

by George D. Kuh

High Impact Practices
★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

★ First-Year Seminars and Experiences
★ Common Intellectual Experiences
★ Learning Communities
★ Writing-Intensive Courses
★ Collaborative Assignments and Projects
★ “Science as Science Is Done”/Undergraduate Research
★ Diversity/Global Learning
★ Service Learning, Community-Based Learning
★ Internships
★ Capstone Courses and Projects
Impact of Educationally Purposeful Practices on First Academic Year GPA by Pre-College Achievement Level

Impact of Educationally Purposeful Practices on First Academic Year GPA by Race/Ethnicity

Impact of Educationally Purposeful Practices on the Probability of Returning for the Second Year of College by Race

Outcomes of High Impact Practices for Underserved Students: A Review of the Literature

Lynn Swaner and Jayne Brownell
(Forthcoming AAC&U report, 2009)
The Good News

High Impact Practices Foster Gains on Essential Learning Outcomes

The Sobering News

We Have Almost No HIP/Learning Outcomes Research At All on Underserved Students

Fulfilling the Promise of Intentional and Integrative Learning
Aims/Outcomes Addressed Across the Curriculum

★ First to Final Year

★ General Education AND the Departments

★ Co-Curriculum as Well
Align Learning Outcomes With Intentional Curricular and Pedagogical Strategies
Broad Knowledge/Big Questions

★ Introduced in First Year Courses and Experiences
★ Addressed in Advanced, Problem-Based Courses
★ And/or Learning Communities
Intellectual and Practical Skills

★ Incorporated in All General Education Courses

★ Transparently Taken to a Higher Level in the Major and Capstone Work

★ Incorporated in Undergraduate Research and/or Creative Projects
Personal and Social Responsibility

Consider a “Mini-Core:”
★ Thematic, Topical Courses
★ First to Final Year
Integrative and Applied Learning

- Topically Linked Courses
- Community-Based Learning
- Milestone and Capstone Projects and Assessments
The Majority of Institutions Use a Distribution Model with Additional Integrative Features

- Distribution model only: 15%
- Distribution model with other features: 64%
- One or more other features only: 18%
What are the “Additional Integrative Features?”

- Common Intellectual Experiences
- Thematic Required Courses
- Upper-Level Requirements
- Core Curriculum – 2 to 4 courses
- Learning Communities
“We can—and should—provide every student with an integrative, liberal education—not just some of them.”