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: This listing was developed 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 College Learning for the New Global Century (2007). For further information, see www.aacu.org/leap.