Preparing Students for Success in a Global Economy: Questioning Liberal Education’s Enduring Value(s)

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TWO THEMES:
CLOSING GAPS AND CONNECTING THE DOTS

THREE GAPS:

• What our economy and society needs and on what the national discourse—media, policymakers--about higher education is focused?

• What graduates need and what they are getting from higher education today?

• What our vision and ideals are and what our actual practices are?
The Value(s) of Higher Education: Public Skepticism and Defining What Success Means

- 60% of public agreed that “colleges today are like most businesses and care more about the bottom line than about making sure students have a good educational experience.” (up from 52% in 2007). (Public Agenda, 2009)

- 57% of Americans said that “colleges fail to provide students with good value for money spent.” (Pew Research Center, 2012)

- 75% of Americans say that the qualifications of the faculty are very important in assessing quality. (Gallup/Lumina 2014)

- 68% say the percentage of graduates who are able to get a good job is very important in selecting a college. (Gallup/Lumina 2014)

- 81% say that the quality of a college degree program is very important when selecting a college. (Gallup/Lumina 2014)
Liberal Education and America’s Promise (2005-present)

• A national initiative that champions the importance of a twenty-first-century liberal education—for individual students and for a nation dependent on economic creativity and democratic vitality.

• LEAP advocates for a capacious vision of liberal education – a vision that positions liberal education as the “definition” of what “quality” looks like in our time. It is not confined just to liberal arts colleges nor exclusive to liberal arts and sciences disciplines.

• LEAP involves hundreds of colleges, state systems, consortia, business leaders, civic leaders, and educators—and works through campus action, advocacy, and research.
College Learning for the New Global Century (2007)

“The world in which today’s students will make choices and compose lives is one of disruption rather than certainty, and of interdependence rather than insularity.”

LEAP Asks:

• How do we educate students for success in this kind of world?
• What are the Essential Learning Outcomes and set of educational practices aligned to this reality?
“In an era when knowledge is the key to the future, all students need the scope and depth of learning that will enable them to understand and navigate the dramatic forces—physical, cultural, economic, technological—that directly affect the quality, character and perils of the world in which they live.”
LEAP Definition of Liberal Education

An approach to college learning that empowers individuals and prepares them to deal with complexity, diversity and change. It emphasizes broad knowledge of the wider world (e.g., science, culture and society) as well as in-depth achievement in a specific field of interest. It helps students develop a sense of social responsibility as well as strong intellectual and practical skills that span all areas of study, such as communication, analytical and problem-solving skills, and includes a demonstrated ability to apply knowledge and skills in real-world settings.
Where is the Value?

Is it in the pulling apart, the discrete pieces (of information, courses, knowledge, competencies, disciplines, job-training skills)?

Or

Is it in the integration, the coming together, the purposeful well-being over a lifetime?
LEAP Centennial Video

Students telling their stories of “good educational experiences” and their definitions of success
What Does America Need from Higher Education?
Narrowing Our Vision to “Training” for Jobs

“We’re working to … offer the real-world education and hands-on training that can lead directly to a job and career. We’re shaking up our system of higher education to give parents more information, and colleges more incentives to offer better value, so that no middle-class kid is priced out of a college education. We’re offering millions the opportunity to cap their monthly student loan payments to ten percent of their income…”

President Barack Obama, 2014

“…the President’s Commission on Higher Education has attempted to select, from among the principal goals for higher education, those which should come first in our time. They are to bring to all the people of the Nation:

• Education for a fuller realization of democracy in every phase of living;
• Education directly and explicitly for international understanding and cooperation;
• Education for the application of creative imagination and trained intelligence to the solution of social problems and to the administration of public affairs.”
The Purpose and Future of Higher Education

The End of College: Creating the Future of Learning and the University of Everywhere by Kevin Carey

American Higher Education in Crisis: What Everyone Needs to Know by Goldie Blumenstyk

College Disrupted: The Great Unbundling of Higher Education by Ryan Craig

College Unbound: The Future of Higher Education and What It Means for Students by Jeffery Selingo
The Great Unbundling—The iTunes U?

[The great unbundling of higher education. Students will…upload their resumes and transcripts and…map their competencies to specific job or career goals. Empowered by an understanding of the gap between where they are and where they need to be, students will leverage Netflix-like recommendation engines to find the best courses and credentials to pursue. The bundle will begin to seem anachronistic as students are able to pick and choose the components they think they need. The university will remain the locus of educational content and talent. Colleges and universities will produce modules that yield the best outcomes on the core cognitive skills most predictive of job performance…

In the era of iTunes U, components or modules that produce the best outcomes will be widely recommended. Higher education will become more of a “hits” business than it is today.

"You've got to want to connect the dots, Mr. Michaelson."
The LEAP Challenge: Every Student Should Do Signature Work

For more information, see http://www.aacu.org/leap/challenge
The Three Gaps

• What our economy and society needs and on what the national discourse—media, policymakers--about higher education is focused?

• What graduates need and what they are getting from higher education today?

• What our vision and ideals are and what our actual practices are?
The LEAP Challenge

“It is high time to break free of the old ‘breadth first, depth second’ model for college learning. Instead, we need guided pathways to integrative and adaptive learning. We must ensure that all students are given opportunities to tackle complex questions—from first to final year.”

Carol Geary Schneider, president, AAC&U

The LEAP challenge is to make integrated, problem-based Signature Work a goal for all students—and the expected standard of quality learning in college.
The Big Economic Picture

“Human work will increasingly shift toward two kinds of tasks: solving problems for which standard operating procedures do not currently exist, and working with new information—acquiring it, making sense of it, communicating it to others….today, work that consists of following clearly specified directions is increasingly being carried out by computers and workers in lower-wage countries. The remaining jobs that pay enough to support families require a deeper level of knowledge and the skills to apply it.”

Dancing With Robots (2013)

Figure 3: Index of Changing Work Tasks in the U.S. Economy 1960-2009
2015 Public Opinion Research

• Student focus groups (fall 2014)
• Student national survey and employer national survey (commissioned by AAC&U; conducted by Hart Research Associates; first of several reports on findings released January 2015)

Falling Short? College Learning and Career Success

www.aacu.org/leap/public-opinion-research
Three in five employers believe that it takes BOTH specific knowledge/skills and broad knowledge/skills to achieve long-term career success.

Which is more important for recent college graduates to have who want to pursue advancement and long-term career success at your company?

(employers)

Range of knowledge and skills that apply to a range of fields or positions

Knowledge and skills that apply to a specific field or position

25% 15%

College students:
Specific 15%
Both 63%
Broad range 22%

Both field-specific and broad range of knowledge and skills
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>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>94%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All college students should gain an understanding of democratic institutions and values</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>86%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Every college student should acquire broad knowledge in the liberal arts and sciences</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>87%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Learning Outcomes that at Least Four in Five 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>Employer Rating</th>
<th>Student Rating</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
High-Impact Educational Practices

- First-Year Seminars and Experiences
- Common Intellectual Experiences
- Learning Communities
- Writing-Intensive Courses
- Collaborative Assignments and Projects
- Undergraduate Research
- Diversity/Global Learning
- Service Learning, Community-Based Learning
- Internships
- Capstone Courses and Projects
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 say they are more likely to consider hiring recent college graduates who have completed an applied learning or project-based learning experience.

How much more likely is your company to consider hiring recent college graduates if they have had this experience?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Experience</th>
<th>Much more likely to consider</th>
<th>Somewhat more likely to consider</th>
<th>Students: more likely to be hired</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Internship/apprenticeship with company/organization</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>95%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senior thesis/project demonstrating knowledge, research, problem-solving, communication skills</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>61%</td>
<td>89%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multiple courses involving significant writing</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>73%</td>
<td>76%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research project done collaboratively with peers</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>76%</td>
<td>82%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Service-learning project with community organization</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>79%</td>
<td>85%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Field project in diverse community with people from different background/culture</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>78%</td>
<td>87%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Study abroad program</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>87%</td>
<td>71%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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 decisionmaking</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>62%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Locating, organizing, evaluating information</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>64%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oral communication</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>62%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working with numbers/statistics</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>55%</td>
</tr>
<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*

(continued)

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

*8-10 ratings on zero-to-ten scale*
The T-Shaped Professional

Boundary Crossing Competencies
- Teamwork, communication, perspective, networks, critical thinking, global understanding, project management, etc..

Many Disciplines
- Understanding & communications

ME

Deep in at least one discipline
- Analytic thinking & problem solving

Deep in at least one system
- Analytic thinking & problem solving
How Do We Close the Gaps?
Prioritize Integration and Collaborate Across Divisions

- Need Redesign of Curricular Pathways Rich in High-Impact Practices—both General Education and Majors
- Need Redesign of Assessment Approaches Focused on Projects and Signature Work
- Need Integration of Curricular, Co-Curricular, Work-based learning—advising and career exploration
- Need New Ways for Graduates to Demonstrate Their Achievement (e.g. e-portfolios, sophisticated Linked-In pages, etc.)
Collaboration is Hard—It Doesn’t Come Naturally

“Sometimes I think the collaborative process would work better without you.”
VALUE—Valid Assessment of Learning in Undergraduate Education

- Campus-based assessment family of projects launched in 2007 focused on using common rubrics to assess authentic student work products usually collected in portfolios or developed via signature assignments.
- Common rubric bank of 16 rubrics for broad T-competencies

www.aacu.org/VALUE
General Education Maps and Markers

Redesign general education around core principles of:

• Proficiency (T-Shaped Competencies)
• Agency and Self-Direction
• Integrative Learning and Problem-Based Inquiry
• Equity
• Transparency and Assessment

General Education Maps and Markers: Designing Meaningful Pathways to Student Achievement (AAC&U 2015)

General Education Transformed, by Paul Gaston (forthcoming 2015)
A Twenty-First-Century Liberal Education

Source: General Education Transformed (Gaston, forthcoming 2015)
What Students and Our Society Need and Deserve

“In a world of relentless change, all students need the kind of education that leads them to ask not just ‘how do we get this done?’ but also ‘what is most worth doing?’”

College Learning for the New Global Century, 2007