Committing to Quality—
for Students, the Economy, and Constitutional Democracy

Preparing All Students to Create Solutions for the Future

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Making the Shift to Inclusive Excellence

	Liberal Education in the Twentieth Century	Liberal Education in the Twenty-First Century
What	• An elite curriculum • Nonvocational • Intellectual, personal, and civic development • An option for the fortunate	• A necessity for *all* students • Essential for success in a global economy and for informed citizenship, US and global • Intellectual, personal, civic, and professional development
How	• Through studies in arts and sciences disciplines ("the major") and/or through general education in the initial years	• Through studies that emphasize the LEAP Essential Learning Outcomes in general education and across the entire educational continuum and *all* fields of study—from school through college—at progressively higher levels of achievement
Where	• Liberal arts colleges or colleges of arts and sciences in larger institutions	• All schools, community colleges, colleges, and universities; goals for all fields of study

Big Questions, Urgent Challenges: Liberal Education and Americans' Global Future; Strategic Plan 2013–17 (AAC&U, 2013), www.aacu.org/about/documents/strategicplan2013_17.pdf.

Liberal Education: A Guide to Frequently Confused Terms

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 major fields of study**, such as communication, analytical and problem-solving skills, and includes a demonstrated ability to apply knowledge and skills in real-world settings.

LIBERAL ARTS: Specific disciplines (e.g., the humanities, arts, sciences, and social sciences)

LIBERAL ARTS COLLEGE: A particular institutional type – often small, often residential – that facilitates close interaction between faculty and students, while grounding its curriculum in the liberal arts disciplines.

ARTES LIBERALES: Historically, the basis for the modern liberal arts: the trivium (grammar, logic and rhetoric) and the quadrivium (arithmetic, geometry, astronomy, and music).

GENERAL EDUCATION: The part of a liberal education curriculum shared by all students. It provides broad learning in liberal arts and science disciplines and forms the basis for developing important intellectual, civic and practical capacities. General education can take many forms, and increasingly includes introductory, advanced, and integrative forms of learning.

School Problems vs. Real-world Problems

	School problems/case studies	Authentic, unscripted problems
Scope/parameters of the problem	Defined, given to the student; hypothetical or historical	Not well defined; there is uncertainty and ambiguity, and in many cases, deep disagreement
Solution	One or more right solutions, known by the instructor (or determined by history)	No known or right solution (or the challenge is to find solutions that are better or radically different from those in existence)
What students are required to learn	Predetermined body of knowledge deemed relevant to the problem given by the instructor	Emerging areas of inquiry, which may span different disciplines, and frequently involve field-based learning as well
Skills that are fostered	Analytical and communication skills, problem-solving skills	Problem-finding and problem-framing skills, engaging diverse perspectives and experiences; synthesis skills (to make sense of data) and creative skills (to come up with new solutions)
↘Ownership of the process	Usually instructor driven, may involve collaborative work	► Students must take ownership of the problem, the inquiry and the implications of their choices
Role of the instructor	Sage on the stage	Guide on the side

Adapted with permission from Leticia Britos Cavagnaro and Humera Fasihuddin, "A Moonshot Approach to Change in Higher Education: Creativity, Innovation, and the Redesign of Academia," *Liberal Education* 102, no. 2 (2016): table 1

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: *College Learning for the New Global Century* (2007) and *The LEAP Vision for Learning* (2011). For more information, see www.aacu.org/leap.

LEAP

High-Impact Educational Practices

First-Year Seminars and Experiences

Many schools now build into the curriculum first-year seminars or other programs that bring small groups of students together with faculty or staff on a regular basis. The highest-quality first-year experiences place a strong emphasis on critical inquiry, frequent writing, information literacy, collaborative learning, and other skills that develop students' intellectual and practical competencies. First-year seminars can also involve students with cutting-edge questions in scholarship and with faculty members' own research.

Common Intellectual Experiences

The older idea of a "core" curriculum has evolved into a variety of modern forms, such as a set of required common courses or a vertically organized general education program that includes advanced integrative studies and/or required participation in a learning community (see below). These programs often combine broad themes—e.g., technology and society, global interdependence—with a variety of curricular and cocurricular options for students.

Learning Communities

The key goals for learning communities are to encourage integration of learning across courses and to involve students with "big questions" that matter beyond the classroom. Students take two or more linked courses as a group and work closely with one another and with their professors. Many learning communities explore a common topic and/or common readings through the lenses of different disciplines. Some deliberately link "liberal arts" and "professional courses"; others feature service learning.

Writing-Intensive Courses

These courses emphasize writing at all levels of instruction and across the curriculum, including final-year projects. Students are encouraged to produce and revise various forms of writing for different audiences in different disciplines. The effectiveness of this repeated practice "across the curriculum" has led to parallel efforts in such areas as quantitative reasoning, oral communication, information literacy, and, on some campuses, ethical inquiry.

Collaborative Assignments and Projects

Collaborative learning combines two key goals: learning to work and solve problems in the company of others, and sharpening one's own understanding by listening seriously to the insights of others, especially those with different backgrounds and life experiences. Approaches range from study groups within a course, to team-based assignments and writing, to cooperative projects and research.

Undergraduate Research

Many colleges and universities are now providing research experiences for students in all disciplines. Undergraduate research, however, has been most prominently used in science disciplines. With strong support from the National Science Foundation and the research community, scientists are reshaping their courses to connect key concepts and questions with students' early and active involvement in systematic investigation and research. The goal is to involve students with actively contested questions, empirical observation, cutting-edge technologies, and the sense of excitement that comes from working to answer important questions.

Diversity/Global Learning

Many colleges and universities now emphasize courses and programs that help students explore cultures, life experiences, and worldviews different from their own. These studies—which may address U.S. diversity, world cultures, or both—often explore "difficult differences" such as racial, ethnic, and gender inequality, or continuing struggles around the globe for human rights, freedom, and power. Frequently, intercultural studies are augmented by experiential learning in the community and/or by study abroad.

ePortfolios

ePortfolios are the latest addition to AAC&U's list of high-impact educational practices, and higher education has developed a range of ways to implement them for teaching and learning, programmatic assessment, and career development. ePortfolios enable students to electronically collect their work over time, reflect upon their personal and academic growth, and then share selected items with others, such as professors, advisors, and potential employers. Because collection over time is a key element of the ePortfolio process, employing ePortfolios in collaboration with other high-impact practices provides opportunities for students to make connections between various educational experiences.

Service Learning, Community-Based Learning

In these programs, field-based "experiential learning" with community partners is an instructional strategy—and often a required part of the course. The idea is to give students direct experience with issues they are studying in the curriculum and with ongoing efforts to analyze and solve problems in the community. A key element in these programs is the opportunity students have to both *apply* what they are learning in real-world settings and *reflect* in a classroom setting on their service experiences. These programs model the idea that giving something back to the community is an important college outcome, and that working with community partners is good preparation for citizenship, work, and life.

Internships

Internships are another increasingly common form of experiential learning. The idea is to provide students with direct experience in a work setting—usually related to their career interests—and to give them the benefit of supervision and coaching from professionals in the field. If the internship is taken for course credit, students complete a project or paper that is approved by a faculty member.

Capstone Courses and Projects

Whether they're called "senior capstones" or some other name, these culminating experiences require students nearing the end of their college years to create a project of some sort that integrates and applies what they've learned. The project might be a research paper, a performance, a portfolio of "best work," or an exhibit of artwork. Capstones are offered both in departmental programs and, increasingly, in general education as well.

CIVIC LEARNING for an ENGAGED DEMOCRACY

Know. Experience. Act.

The American Association of Colleges and Universities--a founding and lead partner in the Civic Learning and Democracy Engagement Coalition--helped identify High Impact Practices (HIPs) that support both increased completion *and* gains in essential learning outcomes when students participate in them.

Employer Priorities for Most Important College Learning Outcomes

Knowledge of Human Cultures and the Physical and Natural World

• Broad knowledge in the liberal arts and sciences	78% ■
• Knowledge and understanding of democratic institutions and values	87% ■
• Intercultural skills and understanding of societies and cultures outside the US	78% ■

Intellectual and Practical Skills

• Oral communication	85% ❖
• Teamwork skills in diverse groups	83% ❖
• Written communication	82% ❖
• Critical thinking and analytic reasoning	81% ❖
• Complex problem solving	70% ❖
• Information literacy	68% ❖
• Innovation and creativity	65% ❖
• Technological skills	60% ❖
• Quantitative reasoning	56% ❖

Personal and Social Responsibility

• Problem solving in diverse settings	96% ■
• Civic knowledge, skills, and judgment essential for contributing to the community and to our democratic society	86% ■
• Ethical judgment and decision making	81% ❖

Integrative and Applied Learning

• Applied knowledge in real-world settings	80% ❖

Note: These data are taken from *Falling Short? College Learning and Career Success,* a 2015 report on findings from a survey of employers and a survey of college students conducted for AAC&U by Hart Research Associates. For a full report on this survey and earlier reports on employer views, see www.aacu.org/leap.

■ indicates percentage of employers who "strongly agree" or "somewhat agree" that, "regardless of a student's chosen field of study," every student should attain this area of knowledge or skill.

❖ indicates percentage of employers who rate this outcome as very important (8-10 on a 10 point scale) for recent graduates entering the job market.

Employer Support for Applied Learning Practices

★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

• **73%** of employers believe that college graduates' preparation for careers would improve **if they were required to complete a significant applied learning project.***

• College graduates are **2.4 times as likely to be engaged at work** if they had an internship or job that allowed them to apply their classroom learning, were active in cocurricular activities, and worked on a project that took a semester or more to complete.**

• **91%** of employers say that, whatever their major, all students should have experiences in solving problems with people whose views are different than their own.*

*Employer Endorsement of High-Impact Practices**

A majority of employers say they are *more likely to hire* college graduates who have completed:

	Much more/Somewhat more likely to hire
Internships Internship or apprenticeship with a company or organization	**94%**
Senior Projects Advanced, comprehensive project in senior year, such as a thesis, senior project, or other major assignment that requires the student to demonstrate depth of knowledge in their major AND their acquisition of research, problem-solving, and communication skills	**87%**
Writing-Intensive Courses Multiple courses requiring significant writing assignments	**81%**
Collaborative Research Research project done collaboratively with peers	**80%**
Community-Based/Service Learning A community-based or service learning project with a community organization	**69%**
Study Abroad Study abroad program in which a student lives and studies abroad for a semester or longer	**51%**

* Hart Research Associates. *Falling Short? College Learning and Career Success* (Washington, DC: AAC&U, 2015), www.aacu.org/leap/public-opinion-research

** Gallup. *Great Jobs, Great Lives: The 2014 Gallup-Purdue Index Report* (2014).

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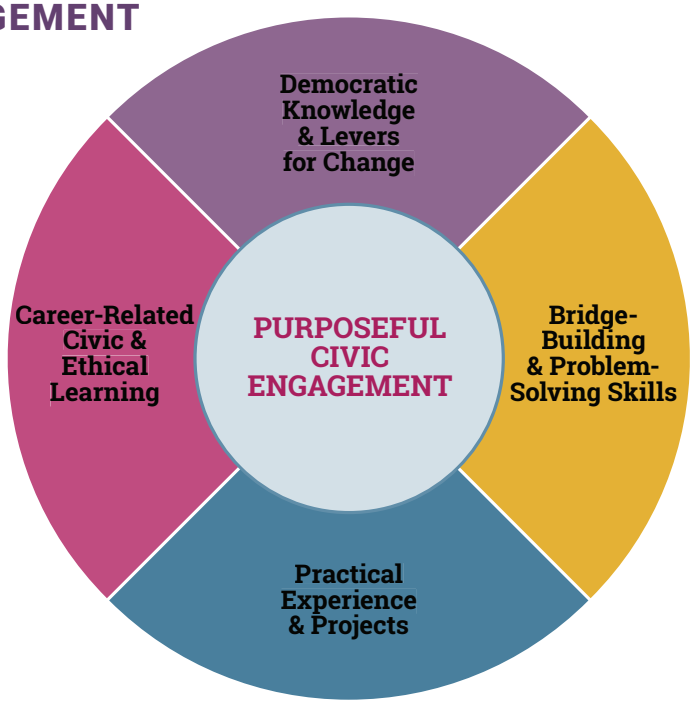
What Should Students Gain from Civic Learning and Democracy Engagement in College?

THE CLDE FRAMEWORK FOR COLLEGE CIVIC LEARNING AND DEMOCRACY ENGAGEMENT

Across the United States, a growing number of educators, policy leaders, and citizens are asking how we can better prepare today's students for their roles and responsibilities in renewing U.S. democracy and securing democracy's success across the globe.



Strengthening P–12 education in history and civics is part of the answer. But with a majority of Americans now enrolling in postsecondary education — either directly from high school or as working adults — the college curriculum is an equally important context for building purposeful civic engagement and the capacities that a successful democracy needs.

Students develop purposeful civic engagement by reflecting on their own civic identities and experiences, exploring democracy's development and aspirations, practicing productive dialogue with those who disagree, and examining — both in general and career-related studies and in community-based practical experience — how choices affect individuals and communities.

"Freedom is never really won. You earn it and win it in every generation."

Coretta Scott King

For 21st-century America, civic learning and democracy engagement also should include explorations of diversity in all its forms. The United States is the world's most diverse democracy, and today, one of our biggest challenges is creating better ways to solve problems together, across many kinds of difference.

The core question college educators need to resolve is whether they will include all college students, or just some college students, in civic learning. The CLDE Coalition is calling on postsecondary education to make college civic learning and democracy engagement both expected and inclusive.

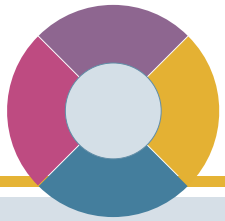
The coalition's **CLDE Framework** provides a point of departure for discussion, debate, and decisions at all levels — national, state, and institutional — about ways to revitalize education for democracy for all postsecondary learners and the democracy we share.

See details overleaf ➜

CIVIC LEARNING for an ENGAGED DEMOCRACY

Know. Experience. Act.

The CLDE Framework for College Civic Learning and Democracy Engagement Includes:



DEMOCRATIC KNOWLEDGE & LEVERS FOR CHANGE

Students explore:

- Key democratic principles and debates about meaning and application
- Constitutionalism and the political systems that frame democratic governance
- Founding and freedom texts for the U.S. democratic republic
- Historical and comparative knowledge of U.S. and global freedom movements
- Authoritarianism and other anti-democracy movements
- Civic inquiry and public good questions related to students' careers
- Levers for influencing change in civil society and specific career fields
- Guided reflection on students' experiences and views of democracy

Where? In general education programs and courses that explore democracy's development, principles, contestations, and challenges, including movements for policy and societal change, and in students' majors, including career and technical fields

BRIDGE-BUILDING & PROBLEM-SOLVING SKILLS

Students develop:

- Communication skills: written, oral, and intergroup dialogue
- Critical inquiry and evidence-based reasoning
- Digital, data, and media literacy, including disinformation
- Productive engagement with diverse views and experiences
- Problem solving with diverse partners
- Ethical reasoning about alternative approaches to problems
- Purpose and agency grounded in a strong sense of identity

Where? Practiced across general education and all majors, including career and technical studies, and in co-curricular and community-based experiences and projects

PRACTICAL EXPERIENCE & PROJECTS

Students help create new solutions through:

- Individual and group work on public good and justice questions
- Collaborative service learning projects in courses
- Community-based problem solving with diverse partners
- Research projects with and for community or government organizations
- Public presentation and discussion of project results
- Guided reflection on their learning from field-based experience and problem solving

Where? Research and/or action projects completed to meet degree requirements in majors, certificates, and/or general education

CAREER-RELATED CIVIC & ETHICAL LEARNING

Students work on:

- Public policy and public good issues related to chosen or likely careers
- Levers for influencing policy decisions in their career fields
- Civility, fairness, and collaborative problem solving in work contexts
- Career-related ethical principles and standards for practice
- Civic, ethical, and fairness questions raised through practical problem solving
- Collaborative reflection — with mentors and peers — on civic, ethical, and fairness issues related to careers

Where? In students' major fields, including career and technical studies; in career planning programs, curricular or co-curricular; and in practicums and projects required for a degree or certificate

STUDENTS' PURPOSEFUL CIVIC ENGAGEMENT AND CHOICES FOR THE FUTURE

Through their course-taking, practical experiences working on public good questions, and guided reflection on their own identities, goals, and civic voice, students will make their own decisions about how they want to contribute to the public good beyond college. Some students may work on public good questions related to their professions and/or workplace. Others may become active in local and/or faith communities. Some will choose public service as their career. Many will contribute primarily as engaged and knowledgeable voters.

Whatever their choices for the future, all students should graduate civic ready, democracy ready, and career ready. And they should be deeply conversant with public good questions directly related to their intended careers.

The Civic Learning and Democracy Engagement (CLDE) Coalition brings together education and policy organizations committed to making CLDE a priority across higher education and in public policy. The coalition is led by the American Association of Colleges and Universities, Campus Compact, College Promise, Complete College America, and State Higher Education Executive Officers. The coalition is working in partnership with more than 70 higher education and student success organizations, including many state systems, and all seven institutional accreditors.

Every Student, Every Degree
Sample Four-Year Guided Pathway Using the CLDE Framework

Through **civic learning for an engaged democracy,** students focus deeply on civic inquiry, ethical inquiry, diversity, and democracy across the curriculum. Colleges connect all of these areas to problem solving and weave them into general education and majors.

Students develop democratic knowledge, ethical responsibility, civic engagement, and high-value problem-solving skills that are essential for participating in a democratic society and adapting to a changing workplace.

This sample curriculum includes complex civic and democracy questions; inquiry and problem solving related to the major; a required community-based practicum; and guided reflection about students' development of purpose, agency, and voice from their first to final year.

High-Value Skills Needed in Both Careers and Democracy

- Communications skills
- Critical inquiry and evidence-based reasoning
- Digital, data, and media literacy
- Ethical reasoning and actions
- Problem solving with diverse partners
- Productive engagement with diverse views and experiences
- Purpose and agency grounded in a strong sense of identity

KEY

- *Civic and/or democracy emphasis*
- *Problem-solving emphasis*
- *May explore questions related to public good*
- *Engaging diverse views & perspectives*
- *Courses related to student's major*
- *High-impact practices (HIPs)*
- *Additional courses in student's major*

Core Learning for an Interconnected World

- FIRST-YEAR WRITING WITH INDIVIDUAL & COMMUNITY THEMES/TEXTS
- FIRST-YEAR SEMINAR ON COMPLEX PROBLEMS
- QUANTITATIVE REASONING & DATA ANALYSIS
- CROSS-CULTURAL AND GLOBAL STUDIES
- CREATIVE & ARTISTIC INQUIRY
- CULTURAL/ HISTORICAL INTERPRETATION
- SCIENCE EXPLORATIONS
- SOCIO-ECONOMIC ANALYSIS
- CONSTITUTIONAL DEMOCRACY — Core texts, contested questions, levers for change
- SECOND-YEAR INQUIRY SEMINAR ON COMPLEX PROBLEM SOLVING — Community-based course with project and guided reflection on learning

Problem-Centered Course Clusters

ADVANCED CIVIC INQUIRY AND PROBLEM SOLVING

Drawn from multiple disciplines, these course clusters help students explore problems that are important to the future of democracy and to their intended careers. They emphasize policy issues and debates, engaging diverse perspectives, justice, ethical reasoning, and practical experience in problem solving.*

- DEMOCRACY AND JUSTICE (U.S./Global) At least 1 course
- CIVIC INQUIRY AND PROBLEM SOLVING RELATED TO CAREERS** At least 3 courses across multiple disciplines
- COMMUNITY-BASED PRACTICUM WITH COLLABORATIVE PROBLEM SOLVING AND GUIDED REFLECTION***

- CULMINATING WORK — A student's best work, which can take many forms (e.g., senior project, internship, field work, research, community-based research, creative portfolio)

E-PORTFOLIO SHOWS STUDENT'S WORK ON CIVIC AND SOCIETAL PROBLEMS OVER TIME AND DEVELOPMENT OF HIGH-VALUE SKILLS

* Research methods and/or evaluation of evidence are presumed to be part of the major.

** Sample problems for course clusters include: health policies and politics; social mobility; health and well-being; fueling the world; quests for justice and social power; traditions, cultures, and change; education and democracy; and markets and values.

*** This practical problem-solving experience may be part of the Problem-Centered Course Clusters or a standard part of the major. Where practicums are already required, faculty may choose to strengthen their civic, ethical, and justice components.