

Assessing Intrapersonal and Interpersonal Competencies: The VALUE Strategy

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Setting the Context for Assessment

Intrapersonal and Interpersonal Development need to be part of a larger framework for learning outcomes.

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The VALUE Strategy for Assessment

The VALUE assessment rubrics include many interpersonal competencies, some of which also emphasize self-awareness and reflection.

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In Sum: Fostering Intrapersonal and Interpersonal Learning Requires a Redesign of Learning Priorities and Pathways, with Particular Attention to “Whole Person” Development.



*Association
of American
Colleges and
Universities*

LEAP AT A GLANCE

Launched in 2005, Liberal Education and America's Promise (LEAP) is a national public advocacy and campus action initiative of the **Association of American Colleges & Universities (AAC&U)**. LEAP champions the importance of a twenty-first-century liberal education—for individual students and for a nation dependent on economic creativity and democratic vitality. Through LEAP, hundreds of campuses are making far-reaching educational changes to help all their students—whatever their chosen field of study—acquire the broad knowledge, higher order capacities, and real world experience they need to thrive both in the economy and in a globally engaged democracy.

LEAP listens and responds as employers make the case that today's workers need to be better prepared for a global economy; and focuses on education for knowledgeable citizenship, as well as careers.

TO MAKE EXCELLENCE INCLUSIVE, LEAP PROMOTES

- **Essential Learning Outcomes**—the learning outcomes essential for success in life, civil society, and work in the 21st century. These outcomes include: 1) broad knowledge of culture, science and society, as well as competence in specific fields; 2) intellectual and practical skills, such as inquiry and analysis; critical and creative thinking; written and oral communication; quantitative literacy; information literacy; teamwork and problem-solving; 3) studies and experiences related to democratic and global citizenship and intercultural competence; and 4) integrative, applied and adaptive learning.
- **High-Impact Educational Practices (HIPs)**—ways of engaging and challenging students—such as first year programs, intensive writing, collaborative assignments, undergraduate research, service learning, internships, learning communities, diversity experiences, and major projects that help students achieve essential learning outcomes.
- **Authentic Assessments**—using students' own work and faculty-validated rubrics, probing whether individual students have developed essential capacities, and can apply their learning to complex problems and real-world challenges.
- **Students' Signature Work**—challenging higher education to prepare **all** students to complete a substantial cross-disciplinary project in a topic significant to the student and society, as part of the expected pathway to a degree. The signature project can take one of many forms (e.g., capstone, internship, field work, research, community-based research).

AREAS OF WORK

Campus Action

- Faculty-led strategies for deepening and assessing student learning;
- LEAP Campus Action Network (350 two- and four-year institutions – private and public – and organizational partners);
- LEAP Partner States and Consortia – California State University System, Indiana, Kentucky, Massachusetts, Michigan, North Dakota, Oregon, Utah, Virginia, Wisconsin; LEAP Texas; LEAP Washington; COPLAC; NAC&U; several other states seeking inclusion; international partners, including Qatar University and the Japan Association for College and University Education (JACUE);
- Summer institutes for campus teams working on outcomes in general education, arts and science learning, integrative learning and departments, assessment and institutional change to make excellence inclusive;
- Major initiatives to advance STEM reform.

Authentic Evidence

- LEAP VALUE Multi-state project – nationally validated rubrics for assessing students and reporting on 16 essential learning outcomes that are integral to a liberal education; proof of concept study in 9 states
- Reports—prepared in concert with research agencies—on students' achievement of essential learning outcomes and their participation in high impact forms of learning;
- Employer research on learning and experiences students need for success in the workplace.

Public Advocacy

- LEAP advocacy seeks to spark public debate about the college learning outcomes essential for all students; to create more informed public support for higher education and for changes to improve quality; and to challenge the belief that students must choose either a broad education or a practical education.
- LEAP Presidents' Trust – connecting LEAP with public and local priorities – economic and civic

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.



Top Learning Outcomes for All College Students



★ Knowledge of Human Cultures and the Physical and Natural World

	<u>2009</u>	<u>2015</u>
• Humanities	92%	92%
• Sciences	91%	92%
• Social Sciences	90%	89%
• Global/World Cultures	87%	89%
• Mathematics	87%	92%
• Diversity in the United States	73%	73%

★ Intellectual and Practical Skills

• Writing Skills	99%	99%
• Critical Thinking	95%	98%
• Quantitative Reasoning	91%	94%
• Oral Communication	88%	82%
• Intercultural Skills	79%*	79%*
• Information Literacy	76%	76%
• Research Skills	65%	75%

★ Personal and Social Responsibility

• Intercultural Skills	79%*	79%*
• Ethical Reasoning	75%	75%
• Civic Engagement	68%	63%

★ Integrative Learning

• Application of Learning	66%	65%
• Integration of Learning	63%	68%

Note: In 2015, 85% of AAC&U member institutions surveyed reported that they had a common set of learning outcomes for all students. This percentage was up from 78% who reported this in the earlier 2009 study. Percentages cited above include those outcomes for which 2/3 or more of those *with campus-wide goals* report that this outcome is *one of the learning goals they have for all students*.

The four categories of learning outcomes correspond to a set of “Essential Learning Outcomes” developed as part of AAC&U’s LEAP initiative. See www.aacu.org/leap. For 2009 findings, see *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). For 2015 findings, see *National Trends in General Education Design, Learning Outcomes, and Teaching Approaches* (AAC&U and Hart Research Associates, forthcoming January 2016). AAC&U’s 1350 institutional members represent the entire spectrum of regionally accredited postsecondary institutions. Member institutions are half public, half private, and include two-year and four-year institutions, liberal arts colleges, comprehensive institutions, and research universities, both public and private.

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



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.



VALUE: Toward Meaningful Assessment of Student Learning

VALUE (Valid Assessment of Learning in Undergraduate Education) is a campus-based assessment initiative sponsored by AAC&U as part of its Liberal Education and America's Promise (LEAP) initiative. VALUE rubrics or scoring guides provide **needed tools to assess students' own authentic work, produced across their diverse learning progressions and institutions, to determine whether and how well students are meeting graduation level achievement in learning outcomes that both employers and faculty consider essential.**

Teams of faculty and other educational professionals from institutions across the country—two- and four-year, private and public, research and liberal arts, large and small—developed rubrics for sixteen Essential Learning Outcomes that all students need for success in work, citizenship, and life. The **VALUE rubrics** are being used to help institutions demonstrate, share, and assess student accomplishment of progressively more advanced and integrative learning.

Since their release in the fall of 2009, the rubrics have become a widely referenced and utilized form of assessment on campuses across the United States and internationally. As of December 2015, the rubrics have been accessed by more than 42,000 individuals from more than 4,200 unique institutions, including more than 2,800 colleges and universities. The VALUE rubrics have also been approved for use in meeting national standards for accountability established by the Voluntary System of Accountability (VSA).

The VALUE rubrics include **Inquiry and Analysis, Critical Thinking, Creative Thinking, Written Communication, Oral Communication, Quantitative Literacy, Information Literacy, Reading, Teamwork, Problem Solving, Civic Knowledge and Engagement – Local and Global, Intercultural Knowledge and Competence, Ethical Reasoning and Action, Global Learning, Foundations and Skills for Lifelong Learning, and Integrative Learning.**

Sample of VALUE Rubric: Foundations and Skills for Lifelong Learning

Selected Dimensions – Capstone Level

Initiative	Completes required work, generates and pursues opportunities to expand knowledge, skills, and abilities.
Independence	Educational interests and pursuits exist and flourish outside classroom requirements. Knowledge and/or experiences are pursued independently.
Reflection	Reviews prior learning (past experiences inside and outside of the classroom) in depth to reveal significantly changed perspectives about educational and life experiences, which provide foundation for expanded knowledge, growth, and maturity over time.

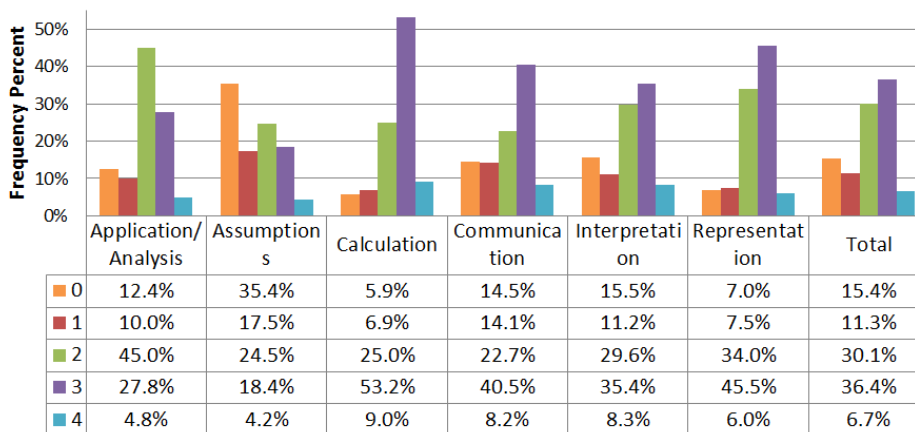
Note: AAC&U has received a major grant from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation to test the use of VALUE rubrics in partnership with SHEEO and with public institutions in twelve collaborating state systems. Two other major grants support demonstration projects with liberal arts colleges, and in Minnesota.

First Results from the VALUE/Multi-State Proof of Concept Study on Two- and Four-Year Students' Achievement Levels in Selected Essential Learning Outcomes

Note: These findings are based on faculty members' assessments of students' performance levels using over 7,000 assignments completed by students to fulfill course requirements in a broad array of courses. Faculty were trained to use AAC&U's LEAP VALUE Rubrics (which were created by faculty teams and validated in earlier studies). The scoring for this study was blind, and no faculty member scored work for his/her home institution. The first set of findings is based on samples of student work from sophomores at 30 public, two-year institutions, and the second set of findings is based on samples of student work from seniors at 29 public, four-year institutions.

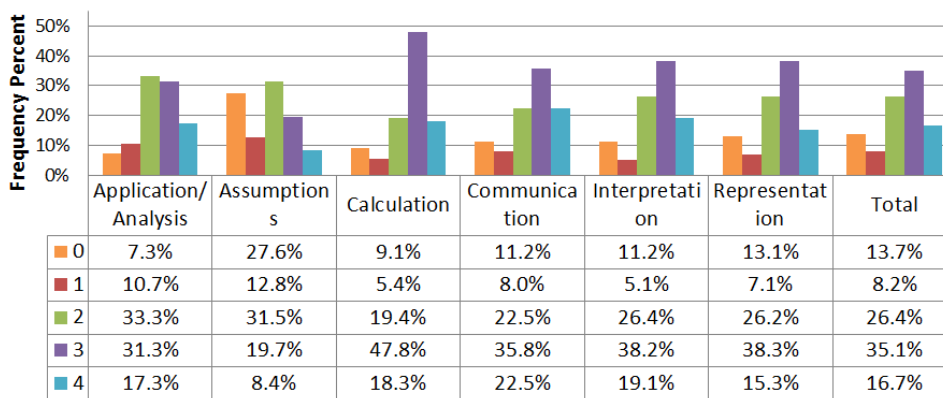
MSC Pilot Study Results—Quantitative Literacy Dimension 2-Year Institutional Score Distribution

% of student work products scored 4-0 by faculty scorers on each
dimension of quantitative literacy



MSC Pilot Study Results—Quantitative Literacy Dimension 4-Year Institutional Score Distribution

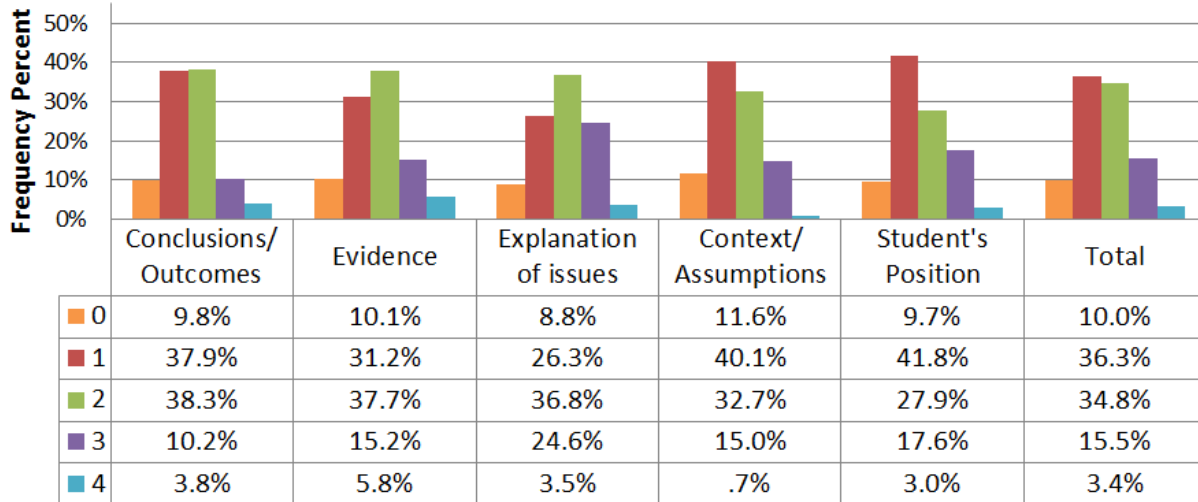
% of student work products scored 4-0 by faculty scorers on each
dimension of quantitative literacy



Findings from the first graph are taken from 30 public community colleges; findings from the second graph are taken from 29 public, four-year institutions. 47% of students whose work was assessed were Pell-eligible.

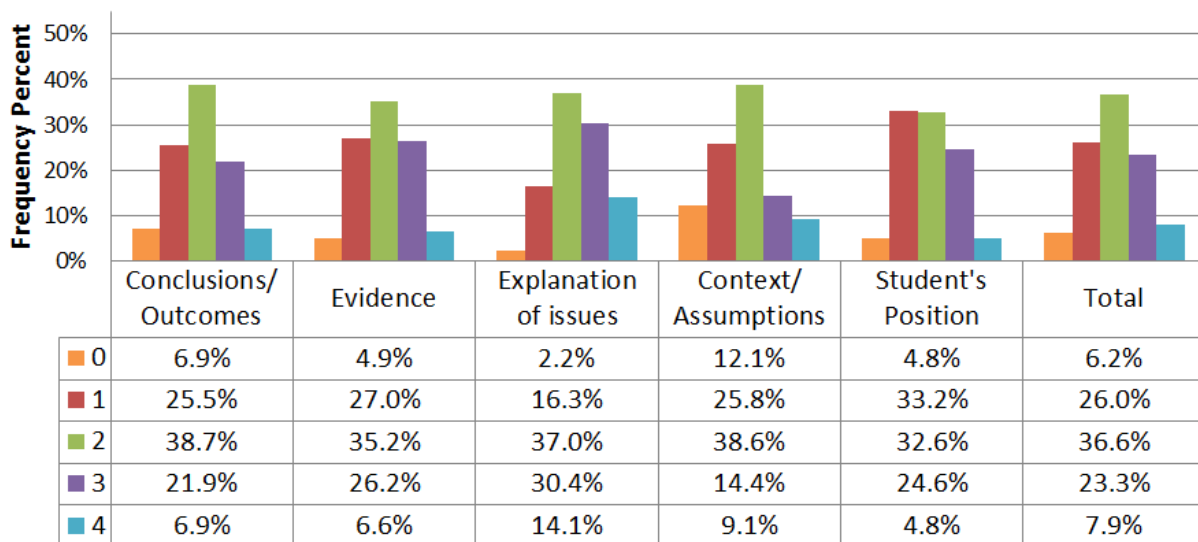
MSC Pilot Study Results--Critical Thinking Dimension 2-Year Institutional Score Distribution

% of student work products scored 0-4 by faculty scorers on each
dimension of critical thinking



MSC Pilot Study Results--Critical Thinking Dimension 4-Year Institutional Score Distribution

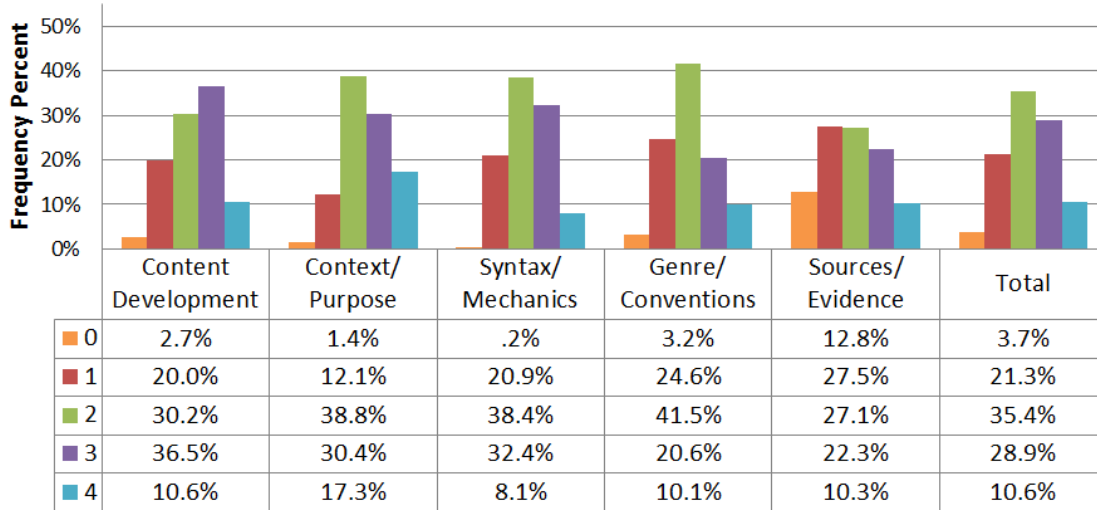
% of student work products scored 0-4 by faculty scorers on each
dimension of critical thinking



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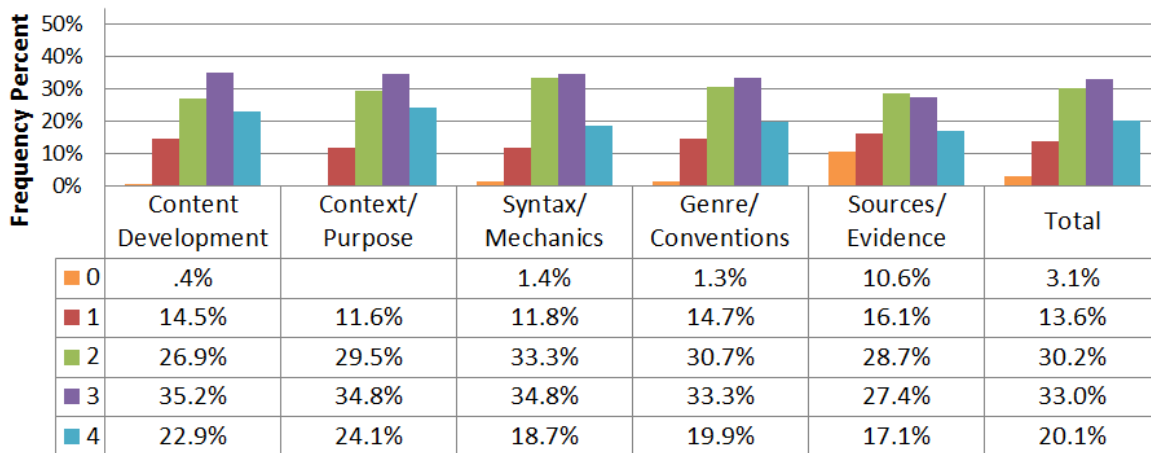
**MSC Pilot Study Results—Written Communication Dimension 2-Year
Institutional Score Distribution**

% of student work products scored 0-4 by faculty scorers on each
dimension of written communication



**MSC Pilot Study Results—Written Communication Dimension 4-Year
Institutional Score Distribution**

% of student work products scored 0-4 by faculty scorers on each
dimension of written communication



Findings from the first graph are taken from 30 public community colleges; findings from the second graph are taken from 29 public, four-year institutions. 47% of students whose work was assessed were Pell-eligible.

High-Impact Educational Practices



These widely tested teaching and learning innovations show substantial educational benefits, especially for college students from historically underserved backgrounds. But these practices remain optional rather than expected on most campuses

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.

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.

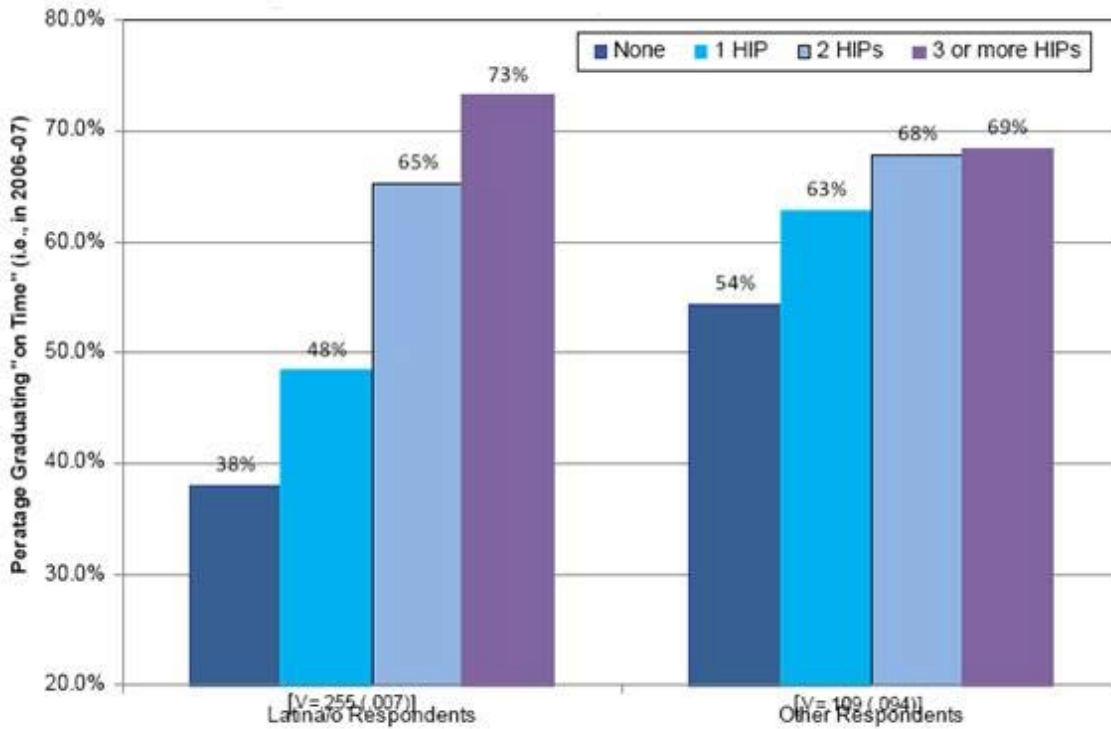
Capstone Courses and Projects

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.



Source: *High-Impact Educational Practices: What They Are, Who Has Access to Them, and Why They Matter*, by George D. Kuh (Washington, DC: AAC&U, 2008).

Impact of Participation in High Impact Practices on Percentage of Senior NSSE Respondents Graduating on Time by Racial & Ethnic Background



Source: *Does Participation in Multiple High Impact Practices Affect Student Success at Cal State Northridge?* by Bettina Huber (unpublished paper on California State University, Northridge students, 2010).

Relationships between Selected High-Impact Activities, Deep Learning, and Self-Reported Gains

	Deep Learning	Gains General	Gains Personal	Gains Practical
<i>First-Year</i>				
Learning Communities	+++	++	++	++
Service Learning	+++	++	+++	++
<i>Senior</i>				
Study Abroad	++	+	++	
Student-Faculty Research	+++	++	++	++
Service Learning	++	+++	+++	++
Senior Culminating Experience	++	++	+++	++

+ p < .001, ++ p < .001 & Unstd B > .10, +++ p < .001 & Unstd B > .30

Source: *High-Impact Educational Practices: What They Are, Who Has Access to Them, and Why They Matter* by George D. Kuh, (Washington, DC: AAC&U, 2008). See also: *Assessing Underserved Students' Engagement in High-Impact Practices* by Ashley Finley and Tia McNair (Washington, DC: AAC&U, 2013).

THE LEAP CHALLENGE:

MAKE APPLIED OR “SIGNATURE WORK” A GOAL FOR ALL STUDENTS— AND THE EXPECTED STANDARD FOR QUALITY LEARNING IN COLLEGE

Definition: Signature Work describes students’ learning related to a problem or project over at least a semester and often longer. It may include work in and across thematically linked courses, research, practicums, community service, or other experiential learning. It will always include writing and reflection of multiple kinds. **The key idea is that the student takes the lead, with faculty and mentors, in pursuing a significant question and in producing work that expresses the insights and learning gained from the inquiry. Signature Work will show, in sum, what students can do with their learning.**

A second key idea is that students need frequent practice to prepare for signature work.

Rationale: As educators, we are preparing students both for an economy that is fueled by successful innovation and for life in diverse communities that urgently need solutions to festering problems on every level: from human dignity and well-being to long-term issues of environmental sustainability. In this context, higher education should help graduates develop the capacities—including investigation, evidence-based reasoning, social imagination, collaborative competence—to grapple with problems where the “right answer” is still unknown and where any answer may be actively contested.

We also are preparing students to navigate in a context of ongoing and often disruptive change, in which their own inner resources – e.g., their sense of purpose, motivation, ethical compass, resilience, and grit—will be important components in their achievement of “success,” in all its multiple manifestations.

To prepare students for a lifetime of working with unscripted questions—in their careers, in diverse communities, and their own lives—college study should immerse them—early and often—in their own explorations of significant and complex problems, questions that matter to them and whose significance to others they are prepared to explain. In exploring these significant questions and problems, students should, with guidance from faculty, take the lead in framing the question, exploring the options, engaging diverse views, and producing visible results—whether through research, writing, practicums, service, social media, e-portfolios, or other forms of invention and problem-solving.

The LEAP Challenge in Brief: Educational institutions should expect and prepare students to produce “signature work” on one or more problems that matter to the students and matter to society. The problems may be **contemporary—issues that need to be solved in a timely and practical way, or they may be enduring and/or personal—issues of values, identity, integrity, spiritual quests, justice, obligations to self and others.**

What matters is that each student is expected to devote time and talent to significant explorations—enacted across multiple courses and/or assignments—and to produce signature work as a degree requirement.

Students’ signature work can be assessed for evidence of their proficiency on key learning outcomes. **But the purpose of signature work is much more than assessment. The goal is tapping students’ own motivations—which begin with their own questions and priorities—kindling imagination, making higher learning really matter, and providing opportunities for learning-in-depth that go well beyond the traditional compilation of course credits, grades, transcripts and credentials.**

*For more information, please see www.aacu.org/leap/challenge and the “AAC&U Centennial Video” on YouTube. See also: Carol Geary Schneider, “Foreword,” *General Education Maps and Markers* (AAC&U, 2015).*