

# 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:

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## ★ 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*

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## ★ 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*

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## ★ 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*

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## ★ Integrative 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 *Liberal Education Outcomes: A Preliminary Report on Achievement in College* (2005). *Liberal Education Outcomes* is available online at [www.aacu.org/leap](http://www.aacu.org/leap).

# Percentage of Employers Who Want Colleges to “Place More Emphasis” on Essential Learning Outcomes



## ★ Knowledge of Human Cultures and the Physical and Natural World

• Science and technology	82%
• Global issues	72%*
• The role of the United States in the world	60%
• Cultural values and traditions (U.S./global)	53%*

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## ★ Intellectual and Practical Skills

• Teamwork skills in diverse groups	76%*
• Critical thinking and analytic reasoning	73%
• Written and oral communication	73%
• Information literacy	70%
• Creativity and innovation	70%
• Complex problem solving	64%
• Quantitative reasoning	60%

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## ★ Personal and Social Responsibility

• Intercultural competence (teamwork in diverse groups)	76%*
• Intercultural knowledge (global issues)	72%*
• Ethics and values	56%
• Cultural values/traditions—U.S./global	53%*

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## ★ Integrative Learning

• Applied knowledge in real-world settings	73%
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**Note:** These findings are taken from a survey of employers commissioned by the Association of American Colleges and Universities and conducted by Peter D. Hart Associates in November and December 2006. For a full report on the survey and its complete findings, see [www.aacu.org/leap](http://www.aacu.org/leap).

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