



Liberal Education and America's Promise (LEAP)

Campaign Goals

- Spark public debate about the kinds of knowledge, skills, and values needed to prepare today's students—from school through college—for an era of greater expectations in every sphere of life;
- Challenge the widespread belief that students must choose either a practical education or a liberal education, by building widespread support for educational changes that already are producing a new synthesis of liberal and practical education;
- Make visible the inherent inequities in current practices that steer low-income students to college programs that teach narrow job skills while more advantaged students reap the full benefits of a first-rate liberal education;
- Document national and state progress in providing every student with access to a high quality education that develops intellectual and ethical capacities; expands cultural, societal, and scientific horizons; cultivates democratic and global knowledge and engagement, and prepares graduates for successful participation in a dynamic and rapidly evolving economy;
- Work in selected states to create and implement action plans—organized in partnership with both employers and public schools—to help college and college-bound students understand, prepare for, and achieve a challenging, public-spirited, and practical liberal education.

Vision of Liberal Education

Liberal Education is an approach to learning that empowers individuals and prepares them to deal with complexity, diversity, and change. It provides students with broad knowledge of the wider world (e.g. science, culture, and society) as well as in-depth study in a specific area of interest. A liberal education helps students develop a sense of social responsibility, as well as strong and transferable intellectual and practical skills such as communication, analytical and problem-solving skills, and a demonstrated ability to apply knowledge and skills in real-world settings. [Learn more about the definition of a modern liberal education.](#)

LEAP Vision for the New Academy

A visual one page summary of the LEAP [Vision for the New Academy](#) (pdf), illustrating the Essential Learning Outcomes and new practices and principles campuses are developing to ensure that all students achieve these outcomes.

Essential Learning Outcomes

The LEAP campaign is organized around a robust set of "Essential Learning Outcomes" (pdf) -- all of which are best developed by a contemporary liberal education. Described in [College Learning for the New Global Century](#) (pdf), these essential learning outcomes and a set of "Principles of Excellence" (pdf) provide a new framework to guide students' cumulative progress through college.

Through its VALUE Initiative, AAC&U has developed a set of [rubrics](#) to assess many of the following 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

Principles of Excellence

As part of a national report published by AAC&U's LEAP initiative in 2007, College Learning for the New Global Century, a national leadership council of educators, policymakers, and business and civic leaders developed a set of principles of excellence for 21st century college learning. Informed by a generation of innovation and by scholarly research on effective practices in teaching, learning, and curriculum, the LEAP Principles of Excellence offer both challenging standards and flexible guidance for an era of educational reform and renewal. The Principles of Excellence can be used to guide change in any college, community college, or university. They are intended to influence practice across the disciplines as well as in general education programs.

- [Download the Principles of Excellence \(pdf\)](#)
 - [The Principles of Excellence in Action on Campus](#)
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Aim High—and Make Excellence Inclusive

Make the Essential Learning Outcomes a framework for the entire educational experience, connecting school, college, work, and life

Give Students a Compass

Focus each student's plan of study on achieving the essential learning outcomes--and assess progress

Teach the Arts of Inquiry and Innovation

Immerse all students in analysis, discovery, problem solving, and communication, beginning in school and advancing in college.

Engage the Big Questions

Teach through the Curriculum to Far-Reaching Issues - Contemporary and Enduring - in Science and Society, Cultures and Values, Global Interdependence, the Changing Economy, and Human Dignity and Freedom.

Connect Knowledge with Choices and Action

Prepare students for citizenship and work through engaged and guided learning on "real-world" problems.

Foster Civic, Intercultural, and Ethical Learning

Emphasize personal and social responsibility, in every field of study.

Assess Students' Ability to Apply Learning to Complex Problems

Use assessment to deepen learning and to establish a culture of shared purpose and continuous improvement.