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Eliciting—and Assessing— Our Students' Best Work

University of Michigan
Provost's Seminar on Teaching
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Carol Geary Schneider





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Our Students' Best Work: A Framework for Accountability Worthy of Our Mission

A Statement of the AAC&U Board of
Directors (second edition, 2008)


[http://www.aacu.org/publications/pdfs/
StudentsBestreport.pdf](http://www.aacu.org/publications/pdfs/StudentsBestreport.pdf)




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A Framework for Assessment


- ★ Essential Aims – Leading to Outcomes
- ★ High Impact/High Effort Learning Practices
- ➔ ★ Assessments That Focus and Deepen Learning



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Setting the Context for Approaches to Assessment



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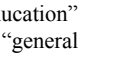
Changing Designs for College Learning

The Nineteenth Century College

➔ A Common Core Curriculum
(All learning is “general and liberal education”)

The Twentieth Century University

➔ Breadth + Depth
(Breadth = General Studies;
Depth = Majors; “liberal education”
becomes synonymous with “general education”)



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Changing Designs for College Learning

The Twenty-First Century Academy

➔ **A Curriculum in Transition:**
Rethinking educational purposes and
practices to better prepare for


- the knowledge explosion
- global interdependence
- innovation in the workplace
- diverse democracy



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*Preparing Students for Complexity and Change:
The Essential Learning Outcomes*

- ★ Knowledge of Human Cultures and the Physical and Natural World
- ★ Intellectual and Practical Skills
- ★ Personal and Social Responsibility
- ★ Integrative and Applied Learning



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The New Themes in College Learning

- ★ Goals Across the Curriculum, Rather than Course by Course
- ★ Capabilities Developed Over Time
 - e.g., Analytical and Research Skills
 - Intercultural Knowledge and Fluency
 - Transferable Learning



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The New Themes in College Learning, cont.

- ★ Integrative Learning—Across the Curriculum
 - General Education and Majors
 - Liberal Arts and Professional Fields
 - Academic Learning and Field-Based Learning
 - Cornerstone to Capstone



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The Changing Goals for Student Learning Imply Changes in the Way We Assess Learning

- ★ Course Grades Do Not Track Cumulative Progress
- ★ We—and Policy Leaders—Want to Know What Students Are Gaining, Over Time




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Three Common Approaches to Assessment of Learning Gains


- ★ Surveys and Student Self-Reports
- ★ Standardized National Tests
 - Multiple Choice
 - Performance Tasks
 - e.g., The Collegiate Learning Assessment
- ★ Persistence and Completion



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What AAC&U Recommends—In “Our Students’ Best Work”

- ★ Design Local Versions of Aims and Outcomes
- ★ Anchor Assessment in the Curriculum
 - Milestone and Capstone Assignments
- ★ Use Rubrics to Assess (Sample) Students’ Progress Over Time



Colleges and Universities Have Developed Local Versions of the Essential Learning Outcomes



High Impact Practices: What They Are, Who Has Access to Them, and Why They Matter

by George D. Kuh
(LEAP report, October 2008, www.aacu.org)



High Impact Practices

- ★ First-Year Seminars and Experiences
- ★ Common Intellectual Experiences
- ★ Learning Communities
- ★ Writing-Intensive Courses
- ★ Collaborative Assignments and Projects
- ★ “Science as Science Is Done”/Undergraduate Research
- ★ Diversity/Global Learning
- ★ Service Learning, Community-Based Learning
- ★ Internships
- ★ Capstone Courses and Projects



Outcomes of High Impact Practices for Underserved Students: A Review of the Literature

Lynn Swaner and Jayne Brownell
(Forthcoming AAC&U report, 2009)

<http://www.aacu.org/meetings/diversityandlearning/DL2008/Resources/documents/CS24HighImpactPracticesHandout.pdf>



AAC&U’s VALUE Project

- ★ Anchors Assessments in Students’ Own Work (Research, Projects, Service, Capstones, etc)
- ★ Provides VALUE Rubrics, keyed to the Essential Learning Outcomes
- ★ Shows What Students Can Do With Their Knowledge



What VALUE Adds

- ★ Students—and Faculty—Know What’s Expected
- ★ Projects Are Part of Courses Students Have to Take
- ★ The Assessment Projects “Count”
- ★ Faculty Can See What Works—and Not
- ★ Work Is Sampled for Public Reporting on Students’ Learning Gains



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*When the Curriculum is Focused,
Assessment Itself Can Become a
High Impact Practice*



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*The Proof is in the Portfolio –
and Institutions That Are Rich in
High Impact Practices Are Poised
to Lead the Way*



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*Students Need to Know that
Their Best Work is Expected*

*And Their Best Work is the Most
Important Evidence We Have
About How Well They Are Using
Their Time in College*

