

University Studies Program

GENERAL EDUCATION FOR THE 21st CENTURY

uwosh.edu/usp

2012-2013

EXPLORATION

HOW DO PEOPLE UNDERSTAND AND ENGAGE IN COMMUNITY LIFE?
HOW DO PEOPLE UNDERSTAND AND BRIDGE CULTURAL DIFFERENCES?
HOW DO PEOPLE UNDERSTAND AND CREATE A MORE SUSTAINABLE WORLD?

CONNECTION

HOW DO PEOPLE UNDERSTAND AND ENGAGE IN COMMUNITY LIFE?
HOW DO PEOPLE UNDERSTAND AND BRIDGE CULTURAL DIFFERENCES?
HOW DO PEOPLE UNDERSTAND AND CREATE A MORE SUSTAINABLE WORLD?

QUESTION

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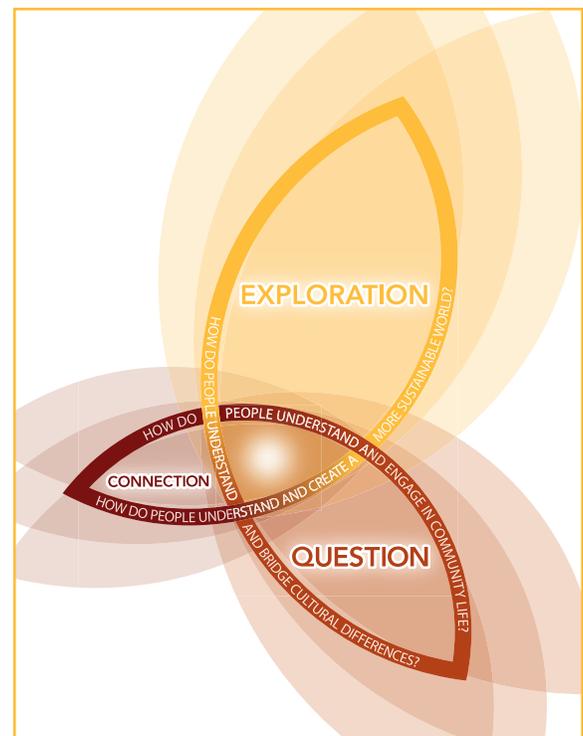
Introduction

One of more than fifty articles in the archive of Best Practice Resources on the General Education Reform website is Laurence Musgrove's piece from the Winter, 2008, issue of **Liberal Education**, "The Metaphors We Gen-Ed By," chronicling the general education reform process at St. Xavier University. During their accreditation visit, external evaluators noted that St. Xavier's core curriculum was "so open to choice within the disciplinary distribution requirements that it failed to guide students adequately through common experiences." Furthermore, the evaluators pointed out, students "were not particularly concerned about where they would end up, as long as they could get their tickets punched enough times to be exchanged for that bigger ticket, the diploma." The team also noted that "without a committee or administrative structure to oversee the curriculum, program assessment and improvement would be very difficult." In fact, there was no coherent general education program to oversee and assess, "just an incoherent flock of courses with responsibility for oversight nested within individual departments." It is impossible not to recognize how uncannily similar this sounds to the way general education operated at UW Oshkosh for some thirty years.

In addition to these and other shortcomings of our previous model, which prompted the now well-known demand from the Higher Learning Commission (HLC) that we revise and twice assess a new general education program prior to our next accreditation visit in 2017, other data pointed strongly to the need for reform. National Survey of Student Engagement data gathered over nearly a decade repeatedly showed that student engagement at UW Oshkosh consistently trailed that at our peer institutions. Data from 2011, for example, showed us to be significantly behind other UW System campuses in high-impact practice areas such as learning communities, service learning, faculty-student research, and senior capstone experiences.

The University Studies Program (USP) is the result of years of dedicated work by people at UW Oshkosh committed to changing all of that.

This program is the product of years of complex collaboration by faculty and staff members from across the university. In 2007 the Liberal Education Reform Team began their work, culminating in the passage of the campus **Essential Learning Outcomes** and the completion of a general education reform "framework," approved by the Faculty Senate in spring 2008 and 2011, respectively. After LERT concluded its responsibilities, a new large group of faculty and staff were charged with moving the framework forward into a concrete and detailed proposal during the summer of 2011. Throughout the fall 2011, interim, and spring 2012 semesters, multiple public mechanisms for generating awareness and gathering feedback were put into place to ensure the transparency of the reform process, including dozens of meetings with academic departments and programs, several public presentations, open forums and web surveys to gather feedback to incorporate



in revised versions of the proposal. These versions were posted for additional campus input on the Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning and the University Studies Program Proposal websites. This collaborative process was informed by best-practice literature on general education reform; the **Liberal Education and America's Promise** (LEAP) initiative of the American Association of Colleges and Universities (AAC&U); successful national models of reform at universities such as Portland State and Western Illinois; and the desire to incorporate data-supported, high-impact practices throughout the first three semesters of our students' academic careers. As such, it embodies exemplary local and national thinking on general education. The proposal was approved in March 2012 by the UW Oshkosh Faculty Senate.

While many possible names for the new program were considered to communicate the magnitude of this change for our academic community, the etymology of the word "university"—meaning both "combined in one" or "whole" and a "community of scholars"—provided a compelling point of departure for the reform team. We envisioned a **Liberal Education** program that builds a vibrant community connecting teachers and learners across our campus.

All students at UW Oshkosh, regardless of their choice of major, now participate in a coherent 41-credit University Studies Program that addresses our **Essential Learning Outcomes** (see Appendix D) in a purposeful, coherent curriculum that serves a four-fold purpose:

- First, in our embedded First-Year Experience (FYE) **Quest I** course, students in small classes taught throughout the disciplines engage in a range of FYE activities designed to ensure a successful transition into university life.
- Second, students take an integrated series of liberal arts **QUEST** courses that feature an immersion in distinctive campus initiatives—**Sustainability; Intercultural Knowledge and Competence**; and **Civic Knowledge and Engagement**—which prepare them for local and global citizenship in the 21st century. Simultaneously, students learn important transferable skills and habits of mind, among them the ability to solve complex problems; to write and speak effectively; and to collaborate successfully with others.
- Third, our program requires students to explore the diverse ways of knowing taught in the sciences, the social sciences, the humanities, and the fine and performing arts. Modeled on our past general education breadth requirements, this part of the program engages students' intellectual curiosity in courses chosen from the categories of **Nature, Culture, and Society**.
- Finally, this program helps students build coherent connections across their University Studies coursework in two ways. First, students **CONNECT** their University Studies experiences in an advanced writing course that promotes further development of writing competence while synthesizing content related to the campus' distinctive initiatives. This course also provides culminating, assessable opportunities for reflection on the purpose, value, and experience of a **Liberal Education**. Second, all students have a **CAPSTONE** experience in their chosen major that includes an opportunity to assess how successfully they have engaged the **Essential Learning Outcomes** in their academic careers at UW Oshkosh.

The University Studies Program provides our students with an assessable, common intellectual experience that also embraces the traditional breadth of a liberal arts education to prepare them well for the challenges of work, for engaged citizenship, and for a meaningful and satisfying life.





Program At-a-Glance

The University Studies Program introduces UW Oshkosh students to the opportunities of university life and the goals of a **Liberal Education**. Students participate in learning communities and connected, invigorating experiences designed to build intellectual curiosity and to lay the foundation for lifelong intellectual development and global citizenship.

Student learning is the focus of the 41-credit University Studies Program. In addition to their broad exploration of knowledge and the development of essential skills, students ask big questions related to three themes drawn from the “responsibilities” of the campus **Essential Learning Outcomes: Sustainability, Civic Knowledge and Engagement**, and **Intercultural Knowledge and Competence**. These areas of inquiry relate to our campus’ distinctive initiatives and are phrased in the form of **Signature Questions (SQs)**:

- How do people understand and create a more sustainable world?
- How do people understand and engage in community life?
- How do people understand and bridge cultural differences?

The program itself is divided among three interconnected areas: **QUESTION, EXPLORATION,** and **CONNECTION**.

- The **QUESTION** component is designed to promote students’ development of the foundational skills necessary to succeed at the university, an understanding of and engagement with the **Signature Questions**, and an awareness of the value and importance of a **Liberal Education**. Students participate in small learning communities, as disciplinary courses are paired with writing and speaking courses in the first two semesters. In the third portion of this sequence, students participate in a community engagement project.
- The **EXPLORATION** component is designed to provide students with a broad understanding of the human experience through different disciplinary ways of knowing about **Nature, Culture, and Society**. These categories reflect the divisions of the College of Letters and Science, and students take a required number of credits in each category.
- The **CONNECTION** component is designed for students to integrate and synthesize knowledge from their **QUEST** and **EXPLORE** experiences in an advanced writing course that synthesizes all three **Signature Questions**.

Through coordinated learning experiences, students also explore their responsibilities as educated citizens in the 21st century. The skills, knowledge, and responsibilities that are the focus of University Studies student learning are drawn from the UW Oshkosh **Essential Learning Outcomes** (approved in May 2008 by the UW Oshkosh Faculty Senate).

As a community of scholars, the faculty and staff who teach in and support the University Studies Program are committed to students’ academic success, the value of a **Liberal Education**, and the implementation of research-based teaching and learning practices.

See Program Description that follows for an expanded explanation of the USP.

Program Description

The purpose of the University Studies Program at the University of Wisconsin Oshkosh is to inspire intellectual curiosity in our students, encourage them to understand their responsibilities as educated people, and lay the foundation for the skills and knowledge that will enable them to succeed not only as university students, but also as engaged local and global citizens. The program is structured around three interconnected areas:

QUESTION / EXPLORATION / CONNECTION

These terms build upon the successful Odyssey program for incoming UW Oshkosh students. They also reinforce the goal of assisting students in developing responsibility for their own learning while underscoring the fact that knowledge is driven by inquiry.

Our campus **Essential Learning Outcomes** list five “responsibilities,” three of which provide common intellectual experiences in the **QUESTION** and **CONNECTION** components of the program. (The other two “responsibilities” are integrated in other ways into the program, as noted in the pages that follow.) The AAC&U defines the three “signature” themes in flexible and wide-ranging ways. Faculty and staff teaching in the University Studies Program likewise interpret them broadly through the lens of their own disciplines. These three themes are highlighted because they correspond with distinctive campus initiatives and student learning commitments that are identifying features of UW Oshkosh:

- ***Sustainability and Its Applications***
- ***Civic Knowledge and Engagement***
- ***Intercultural Knowledge and Competence***

The University Studies Program includes the following broad definitions, drawn from the Faculty Senate-approved **Essential Learning Outcomes**. To build intellectual curiosity among students, these broad themes have in turn been phrased as **Signature Questions**, which provide the structure for the **QUEST** portion of the USP.

Knowledge of Sustainability and Its Applications is the ability to understand local and global earth systems; the qualities of ecological integrity and the means to restore and preserve it; and the interconnection of ecological integrity, social justice, and economic well-being.

Signature Question: How do people understand and create a more sustainable world?

Civic Knowledge and Engagement entails understanding political and nonpolitical processes that influence a local, state, national, or global community and applying skills and strategies that can affect the life of a community in positive ways.

Signature Question: How do people understand and engage in community life?

Intercultural Knowledge and Competence is the understanding of one’s own culture as well as cultures beyond one’s own; the recognition of the cultural values and history, language, traditions, arts, and social institutions of a group of people; the ability to negotiate and bridge cultural differences in ways that allow for broader perspectives to emerge; and the skill to investigate a widerange of worldviews, beliefs, practices, and values.

Signature Question: How do people understand and bridge cultural differences?



QUESTION

Incoming students begin to question in a discipline-based first-year experience (FYE) course while concurrently enrolling in a second course focused upon the skills employers repeatedly name as the most crucial to success in the 21st century, among them the ability to solve complex problems; to locate and evaluate information; to write and speak effectively; and to collaborate successfully with others. By enrolling in these paired courses in their first two semesters on campus, students are placed in learning communities and begin to examine the campus' **Signature Questions**. By the end of their second year of study, they have explored all three **SQs**.

Quest I (1st semester paired courses): **First-Year Experience (FYE) Quest I course + Quest Writing** (Writing Based Inquiry Seminar) or **Quest Speaking** (Communication III)

The same **Signature Question** is addressed in both courses.

In **Quest I**, students take two linked three-credit courses drawn from one of the three **Signature Questions**. By enrolling in paired courses capped at 25 and focusing upon the same **SQ**, students are placed in cohort groups that will provide them with learning communities.

In all **Quest I** courses, students are introduced to the value of a liberal arts education, the three **Signature Questions**, the UW Oshkosh **Essential Learning Outcomes**, and the **ePortfolio** documentation of their learning. This course adopts an "embedded" FYE model, which includes the teaching of disciplinary knowledge, the use of peer mentoring, and the acculturating of students to the academic environment of this university through specific course components (see Appendix A for **Quest I** First-Year Experience [FYE] parameters).

Quest II (2nd semester paired courses): **Quest II course + Quest Writing** (WBIS) or **Quest Speaking** (Comm 111)

(Note that a 4-credit lab science course might identify as a **Quest II** course, with lab sections serving as matched learning communities with the paired writing or speaking course.)

The same **Signature Question** is addressed in both courses.

These disciplinary **Quest II** courses include content connected to a **Signature Question** while simultaneously engaging the **Essential Learning Outcome** of Ethical Reasoning in the context of the course. In the USP, Ethical Reasoning can be broadly construed—from the deliberation of issues and claims to engagement with the driving or pressing questions within each academic field. The **Quest II** course exposes students to the process of reasoning within the stated focus of the course. The paired courses focus upon a different **SQ** from that which students explored in **Quest I** and, through this choice, they are placed in new learning communities. **Quest II** is capped at 50 students because it is paired with two sections of the writing or speaking class, each capped at 25 students. (See Appendix B for **Quest II** parameters)

Notes for **Quest I** and **II**:

- The pairing process for **Quest I and II** classes does not require two members of the teaching community to plan the pairing in advance (though ongoing professional development provides the opportunity for such connections as desired). Rather, "pairing" entails the common **SQ** focus of both courses and students' concurrent enrollment in them.
- Options for separating the course pairings in **Quest I** and **Quest II** is made available for a subset of students (e.g. CAPP speech in high school, students with AP credits, transfer students with speaking or writing course credits, specified individuals who have declared

select majors prior to their first semester enrollment at UW Oshkosh, and students who fail or withdraw from one of the courses in a **Quest I** or **II** pairing.) A course sign-in policy for these students is administered by the University Studies Program, in part to prevent other students from inadvertently registering for an unpaired section of a **Quest I** or **II** course.

Quest III (3rd or 4th semester)

The **Quest III** course focuses upon whichever **Signature Question** students have not yet addressed in **Quest I** or **II**. Students take the **Quest III** course in either the fall or spring semester of their second academic year. **Quest III** is capped at 50 students, with a substantial community engagement project documented through a paper, speech, or other method of learning assessment.

This project is intended to afford an initial opportunity for campus or community engagement, to prepare and motivate students for further, more substantive civic engagement in their majors and beyond. (See Appendix C for the **Quest III** community engagement project parameters.)

Notes for **QUESTION** component:

- **QUESTION** courses are taken sequentially (**Quest I**, **Quest II** and then **Quest III**). When students complete the **QUEST** sequence, they will have addressed all three **Signature Questions**.
- A Learning Technologies Specialist supports the **ePortfolio** component of the University Studies Program.
- An Information Literacy Librarian supports courses in the **QUEST** component of the University Studies Program, including writing and speaking.
- Professional development for the **QUEST** teaching community is ongoing.

EXPLORATION

While they **QUESTION**, students are also engaged in the **EXPLORATION** of disciplinary ways of knowing. Students explore the question of knowledge itself by engaging in the critical examination of disciplinary content, modeling skills and strategies used to explore that content, and cultivating a methodological approach to accumulating, processing, and applying knowledge. Students explore knowledge of **Nature**, **Culture**, and **Society** as delineated in the UW Oshkosh **Essential Learning Outcomes**. The divisions within the College of Letters and Science (Fine and Performing Arts, Humanities, Math/Science, and Social Science) are linked to and identified with the three categories:

Nature

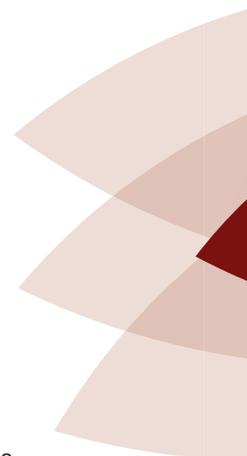
Students explore the physical and natural world, mathematics, life forms, scientific explanation, and/or the environment in courses in mathematics and lab sciences (Math/Science Division).

Culture

Students explore human thought, its intellectual foundations, and/or creative expression in courses in the Humanities and the Fine and Performing Arts Divisions.

Society

Students explore the past, political communities, local and global social relations, diversity, and/or rights and responsibilities in courses in the Social Science Division.





Notes for **EXPLORE** component:

- **EXPLORE** courses need not be connected to a **Signature Question**, though courses with content that is connected to a **Signature Question** are coded with an **SQ** designation to assist students with specific interest in further exploration of **Sustainability, Intercultural Knowledge, or Civic Engagement**.

CONNECTION

After students have completed 15 University Studies credits, or the **QUESTION** component of the USP, they enroll in a **CONNECT** course. An advanced writing course, **CONNECT** further develops writing competence while providing the occasion for students to synthesize all three **Signature Questions**. The **CONNECT** course will also provide culminating opportunities for student reflection on the purpose and value of a **Liberal Education** while serving as a University Studies assessment point, with **ePortfolios** that have been in progress since **Quest I**. (See Assessment Plan for details.)

With course content focused on the **Signature Questions** and the value and purpose of a **Liberal Education**, the **CONNECT** course also develops advanced student writing competencies (for example, rhetorical awareness, analytical reading, synthesis and judgment, craft, and information literacy).

As the improvement of student writing is a shared goal of all departments and programs, the University Studies Program, working with the Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning (CETL), the Writing Center, the **CONNECT** program, and other relevant campus entities, supports collaborative professional activities and an infrastructure to address the ongoing improvement of student writing across campus. This infrastructure includes the development of an online Writing Resource Center to provide resources for faculty and staff teaching writing in their courses, as well as regular opportunities for ongoing conversation about writing pedagogy and student writing success.

Notes for **CONNECT** component:

- **QUEST** courses serve as pre-requisites for the **CONNECT** course.
- As with the WBIS (Writing Based Inquiry Seminar) program, some sections of the **CONNECT** course are open to instructors from disciplines other than English.
- Students take **CONNECT** after completing 15 University Studies credits and before reaching 90 credits toward their degree.

CAPSTONE

As students conclude their University Studies coursework, they will be prepared to engage in the focused work of their majors. Their majors, in turn, conclude with a course or culminating experience that also provides a final opportunity for **Liberal Education** learning assessment. **CAPSTONES** in the major may include internships, study abroad, student teaching, undergraduate research projects, culminating courses, or other appropriate learning experiences.

CAPSTONE course credits are not part of the University Studies Program credit total; nevertheless, the **CAPSTONE** experience serves as the connection between students' two programs of study — USP and the major. The **CAPSTONE** enables students to retrace and reflect upon their University Studies journey while providing a final opportunity to assess how successfully they have met the **Essential Learning Outcomes**. Most importantly, it underscores the value of **Liberal Education** at UW Oshkosh as students move forward as college-educated citizens.

As happens in the **CONNECT** course, assessment of the entire University Studies Program occurs in the **CAPSTONE** through a sample selection of student **ePortfolios**. Assessment of the overall University Studies Program is the charge of the Faculty Senate Committee on Assessment; **CAPSTONE** instructors are not responsible for overall programmatic assessment. (See Assessment Plan.)

Note for the **CAPSTONE**:

- Professional development and on-line resources related to assessment of the **Essential Learning Outcomes** is ongoing.

TRANSFER STUDENTS

One of the goals of the University Studies Program transfer policy is to ensure maximum ease of course transferability both for students transferring into UW Oshkosh and for students transferring from UW Oshkosh to other institutions. Our attention to the specific academic needs of transfer students is critical to the student learning focus of the University Studies Program. While many campus procedures already address transfer students' needs, and UW System transfer agreements with two-year institutions guide the admission process for many, the University Studies Program at UW Oshkosh is designed to help ensure academic success for all transfer students.

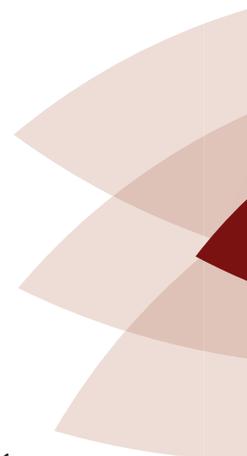
Transfer students with 29 and fewer credits (freshmen):

These transfer students are treated as entering freshmen beginning their University Studies Program. They are required to take **Quest I, II, and III** courses as well as the **CONNECT** course. A course-by-course audit, in addition to courses approved for direct transfer in the UW System Transfer Information System (TIS), allows credits for courses completed at other institutions in communication, writing, and other disciplines corresponding with **EXPLORE** course expectations. (Note: These transfer students enroll in **Quest I** or **Quest II** courses but are not required to enroll concurrently in the communication or writing courses if they enter with credit for those course equivalents.)

Transfer students with 30-59 credits (sophomores):

These transfer students take a zero-credit Transfer Experience Course (TYE) designed to introduce the value and goals of a **Liberal Education** while providing a learning community and a substantive experience at no cost to transfer students. The course is tailored to address the specific needs of sophomore-level transfer students so that they may become acculturated to our campus. In addition, like the FYE, the TYE introduces the three **Signature Questions** and provides an introduction to the academic resources, academic expectations, and academic identity of UW Oshkosh. The Titan Transfer Center develops, implements, and assesses this course. As a component of the USP, the TYE for sophomore-level transfer students is evaluated every two years to ensure that it meets the learning needs of these students, and adjustments will be made as deemed necessary. As the course aims to acculturate transfer students to life at this university, it also focuses on the value of engagement in campus activities.

In addition to the TYE course, sophomore-level transfer students take a **Quest III** course with other non-transfer sophomores. Their **EXPLORE** requirements are determined after a course-by-course degree audit or automatic transfer through TIS.





Notes for transfer students into the USP:

- Sophomore-level transfer students (30-59 credits) are not required to take **Quest I** or **Quest II** courses, as these are specifically designed for first-year students. Most sophomore-level transfer students come to UW Oshkosh with their writing and speaking requirements fulfilled; those who have yet to take these courses enroll in “unpaired” writing and speaking courses.
- Given our commitment to global learning and citizenship, the University Studies Program requires one course each in Non-Western Culture and Ethnic Studies (UW System requirement). Transfer students should be aware of these requirements.

Transfer students with 60 or more credits (juniors and seniors):

The credits of these transfer students transfer in course-by-course through the course audit or automatic transfer through TIS. These students are not required to take the **QUEST** sequence or the TYE. If students have completed an Associate’s degree at a UW System institution, they automatically fulfill the University Studies Program requirements on the UW Oshkosh campus.

Students transferring out of UW Oshkosh:

For students who transfer to another institution, **Quest I, II, and III** courses are coded with the discipline in which they are offered. As such, they will meet requirements of other institutions’ general education programs.

All current and emerging UW System agreements related to inter-institutional transfer are honored by the University Studies Program.

NON-TRADITIONAL STUDENTS

Non-traditional students, including students in the Center for New Learning and others who complete the majority of their classes online, are important members of our student body for whom the **Essential Learning Outcomes** are as vital as they are to all other students. In addition, non-traditional students may be engaged primarily in “remote” learning, may have life experiences significantly different from those of traditionally-aged students, and may have logistical/life demands that affect their curricular and co-curricular choices. While some of these students take “unpaired” **QUEST** courses given the demands of their curriculum, a designated committee is addressing matters related to USP requirements and non-traditional students, including how the current Credit for Prior Learning policy relates to the **Quest III** civic engagement project and/or online options for USP courses.

Credit Overview

QUESTION

Quest I (students choose to focus upon one Signature Question [SQ] , e.g. Civic Engagement)	(3 credits*)
Quest II (students choose to focus upon a different SQ , e.g. Intercultural Knowledge)	(3 credits*)
Quest III (students choose to focus upon the remaining SQ , e.g. Sustainability)	(3 credits*)
Quest Writing Course (WBIS)	3 credits
Quest Speaking Course (Comm 111)	3 credits
Total *The 9 QUEST course credits fulfill EXPLORE course credits as delineated below.	6 credits

QUESTION credits are interconnected with **EXPLORATION** credits in two ways:

- The three **QUEST** courses (**I, II** and **III**) also count as three **EXPLORE** courses (nine credits);
- One Ethnic Studies course and one Non-Western Culture course are required in the USP. A **QUEST** course can fulfill only one of these. An **EXPLORE** course must fulfill the other.

EXPLORATION

Nature Math and two Lab Sciences (+ exceptions) Note: One of the two lab sciences could be accomplished with a Quest II course.		11 credits
Culture Humanities, Fine and Performing Arts (+ exceptions) Note: Students must select courses from at least two different departments/programs.	3-credit Ethnic Studies or Non-Western Culture course • from either Culture or Society • whichever is not fulfilled by Intercultural Knowledge QUEST course	9 credits
Society Social Sciences (+ exceptions) Note: Students must select courses from at least two different departments/programs		3 credits
		9 credits
Total		32 credits

CONNECTION

CONNECT Course: Advanced Writing	3 credits
Total	3 credits

University Studies Program Credit Total	41 credits
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Assessment Plan

The University Studies Program provides a cohesive assessment plan that addresses both individual University Studies courses and the program overall. The purpose of assessment in the USP is to provide a systematic and developmental process for measuring student learning related to the **Essential Learning Outcomes**.

The primary mechanism for assessment in the USP—both of individual USP courses and the program overall—is the **ePortfolio** that is integrated into D2L. In individual USP classes, instructors choose an assignment (or assignments) for students to upload into the **ePortfolio**. While students receive feedback on individual assignments in each USP course, they also have an opportunity to reflect upon and synthesize the full contents of their **ePortfolios** at distinct points in their academic careers, as described below.

- **QUEST courses:** students are introduced to the **ePortfolio** in each of their **QUEST** classes, in which they also begin to archive their learning. Instructors may select the number and type of learning “artifacts” (papers, speeches, community engagement reflections, videos, posters, etc.) that students upload. In this way, all UW Oshkosh students develop electronic repositories with similar content, all of which is evaluated by individual instructors, and thus students have accurate, current information about their achievement of the campus **Essential Learning Outcomes**. This information can also be sampled for campus-wide assessment purposes, allowing UW Oshkosh to evaluate and enhance USP courses.
- **CONNECT course:** students complete their 15-credit **QUEST** sequence before enrolling in the **CONNECT** course. The learning artifacts from their **CONNECT** course are evaluated by **CONNECT** instructors. At the same time, the placement of the **CONNECT** course in the USP curriculum provides an opportunity for programmatic assessment through a sample selection of student **ePortfolios**. These data shed light on how well the University Studies Program is meeting our student learning goals. Programmatic assessment is the charge of the Faculty Senate Committee on Assessment; **CONNECT** instructors are not responsible for assessment of the overall University Studies Program.
- **Major CAPSTONE course/experience:** While most programs at UW Oshkosh incorporate a **CAPSTONE** experience into their curricula (course, internship, clinical experience, study abroad, research project, or other experience), the University Studies Program is designed to support every student’s participation in some form of culminating experience. Using the **ePortfolio**, students have the opportunity to synthesize the learning that has been documented electronically throughout their University Studies coursework. Furthermore, the **CAPSTONE** provides another mechanism for programmatic assessment through a sample selection of student **ePortfolios**. As noted above, programmatic assessment is the charge of the Faculty Senate Committee on Assessment; **CAPSTONE** instructors are not responsible for the assessment of the overall University Studies Program.

While the **ePortfolio** is the primary mechanism for assessing the University Studies Program, some departments also integrate the tool into their own assessment plans.

Fully integrated into the USP, this assessment plan provides a cohesive method to evaluate and enhance students’ **Liberal Education** at UW Oshkosh. To support and sustain these efforts, an Assessment Analyst in the Office of Institutional Research and an **ePortfolio** Specialist in the Department of Learning Technologies are available for consultation. In addition, professional development and online resources related to the assessment of the **Essential Learning Outcomes** are available and ongoing.

Program Administration

Two distinct teams are charged with the administration and faculty governance of the University Studies Program.

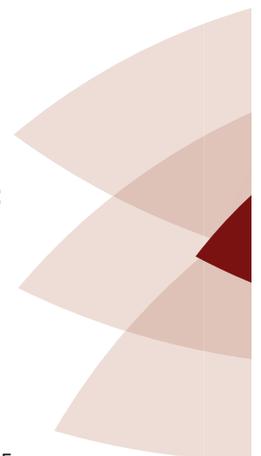
The **University Studies Program Council** is charged with the development, administration, and policy proposal responsibilities of the University Studies Program. During the early implementation of the program, Council members include both instructional and non-instructional staff in the following interim positions:

- Director
- Assistant Director
- **Quest I**/First Year Experience Director and Assistant Directors
- Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning (CETL) Coordinator
- Faculty **Signature Question** Coordinators (**Sustainability, Intercultural Knowledge, and Civic Engagement**)
- **QUEST** Speaking and Writing Coordinators
- **CONNECT** Coordinator
- **Quest III** Community Engagement Project Coordinator
- **ePortfolio** Specialist
- Academic Affairs Liaison
- Assessment Coordinator

The **Faculty Senate University Studies Program Committee** is charged with the course review and approval processes. This faculty governance body includes:

- Seven faculty members appointed by the Faculty Senate (one each from the College of Nursing, the College of Education & Human Services, the College of Business, and four divisions of the College of Letters and Science)
- Faculty Senate Assessment Committee (Faculty Senate appointee)
- Director, University Studies Program
- Academic Staff Representative (Senate of Academic Staff appointee)
- Director, First Year Experience
- Oshkosh Student Association Representative
- Provost's Administrative Representative

The USP Council provides professional development support for course construction in **Quest I, Quest II, Quest III, CONNECT, and EXPLORE**. Subsequently, course proposals move through the faculty governance process to the Faculty Senate USP Committee for review and approval. Like all matters related to the curriculum, all elements of the USP are assessed and open to revision through the regular curricular review and faculty governance processes.





Appendix A: Quest I Parameters

Quest I and the First-Year Experience (FYE) Component

In **Quest I**, a First-Year Experience (FYE), component is “embedded” within a disciplinary University Studies course. This “embedded” model, used across the country, means that University Studies **Quest I** course can be taught within any discipline.

In order to identify as **Quest I**, courses must include the following characteristics, in addition to their disciplinary content.

Liberal Education and Essential Learning Outcomes

The embedded FYE course introduces students to the ideas associated with a **Liberal Education**. It emphasizes how the goals of a **Liberal Education** will inform students’ learning experiences at the university with the aim of providing the foundations and skills for lifelong learning. The **Quest I** course also provides an explicit introduction to the campus **Essential Learning Outcomes** and the University Studies Program, engaging students’ intellectual curiosity while providing a supportive transition to university life.

Signature Questions:

As the first class in a student’s college career, **Quest I** with its embedded FYE exposes students to the campus’ three **Signature Questions** and itself addresses one of those questions in greater depth. The course is expected to include significant engagement with the **Signature Question** linked to it. “Significant engagement” is defined as an apparent focus and/or integration of the content into a minimum of 25 percent of the course.

Evidence of significant engagement with the **Signature Question** content includes relevant student learning outcomes and graded assignments and is intended to be apparent in the course syllabus.

QUEST instructors (**I, II, and III**) are supported by collaborative professional development to assist with the curricular modification necessary to integrate **Signature Question** content into their courses (if such content is not already present in the proposed course).

- Each semester, **Quest I** courses are offered in all three **Signature Question** areas (with approximately one-third of the courses dedicated to each of the three **Signature Questions**).
- If the **QUEST** course focuses upon the **Intercultural Knowledge Signature Question**, that class is designated as either an Ethnic Studies or Non-Western Culture course (whichever is appropriate), supporting another USP goal of developing students’ global learning and their responsibility as citizens of an increasingly diverse world.
- Each **QUEST** course is identified with a **Signature Question**. Changes to **QUEST** courses (including its **Signature Question**) can occur only through the curricular review process (i.e. course cannot change their **Signature Question** from semester to semester without curricular review).

Transition to Oshkosh

The embedded FYE course places special emphasis upon acculturating students to the university, to the expectations of a college-level education, and to the resources and opportunities that exist at UW Oshkosh.

Class Size and Co-Enrollment

The embedded FYE course is capped at 25 to enhance the connection between the student and the instructor. This course is paired with a **QUEST** writing or speaking course, also capped at 25 students. As a result of their concurrent enrollment in both courses (embedded FYE and **QUEST** writing or speaking course) in their first semester at UW Oshkosh, students form a learning community that further aids in their transition to the university.

Peer Mentor

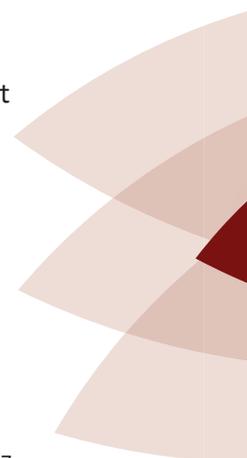
All embedded FYE courses are assigned a peer mentor. The peer mentor enhances the students' connection to the class, to the university, and to each other. Peer mentors serve as intellectual role models and academic resources for first-year students, attending some class sessions and accompanying students to co-curricular activities. Student mentors undergo a training program, and mentors receive a small stipend for their service. (**Quest III** courses also adopt a mentorship program for their community engagement projects. See explanation of **Quest III** components in the pages that follow.) The USP Director facilitates the mentorship programs.

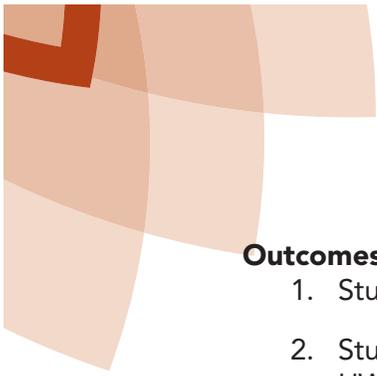
Co-Curricular Activities

The embedded FYE course delineates expectations for student attendance at a variety of co-curricular activities (events on and/or off campus) to reinforce students' engagement in the community. In the fall 2011 FYE pilot, these options included a campus play, an international film, an art exhibit, a musical performance, and an athletic event. Lists of options are generated among the USP teaching community each semester to assist course planning. This component of **Quest I** is intended to generate student awareness of and engagement in campus and community life (crucial contributors to retention and academic success, particularly for first-generation students who comprise more than 50 percent of our population).

Assessment

The embedded FYE course introduces and adopts the **ePortfolio** as a mechanism for student assessment. Students are introduced to the **ePortfolio** as a tool that is available for use throughout their college careers. A specialist in Learning Technologies supports this component of the USP and is available to assist **Quest I** instructors with this element of instruction. In addition to the initial introduction to the **ePortfolio**, **Quest I** instructors select at least one learning artifact (paper, speech, reflection journal from the co-curricular activities, etc.) for students to upload to the **ePortfolio**. Instructors are free to determine the assessment tools for individual elements of the embedded FYE course, though rubrics developed for the assessment of learning outcomes in **Quest I** are available for use by the USP teaching community on the USP webpage. As an example of a learning artifact for **Quest I**, students in the fall 2011 FYE pilot program attended a range of co-curricular activities with one another and their peer mentors. At the end of the semester, these students wrote brief reflective essays based on these events.





Outcomes

1. Students will be able to describe the value of a **Liberal Education**.
2. Students will become familiar with the expectations of a college-level education, the UW Oshkosh **Essential Learning Outcomes**, and the University Studies Program.
3. Students will begin their acculturation to life at this university, developing familiarity with the academic resources and community engagement opportunities at UW Oshkosh.
4. Students will engage in learning communities to enhance their connections to the class, the university, and one another.
5. Students will participate in campus and community life through co-curricular activities.
6. Students will begin to take personal responsibility for their intellectual development by archiving learning artifacts in the **ePortfolio**.

Resources

For instructional support, see the USP Teaching Resources webpage on the CETL website (www.uwosh.edu/grants/cetl).

Appendix B: Quest II Parameters

Quest II and the Ethical Reasoning Component

Quest II is a disciplinary course that integrates content related to one of the three **Signature Questions**. Like their counterparts in **Quest I**, **Quest II** courses contribute to students' intellectual curiosity and support their transition to university life through a learning community.

Liberal Education and Essential Learning Outcomes:

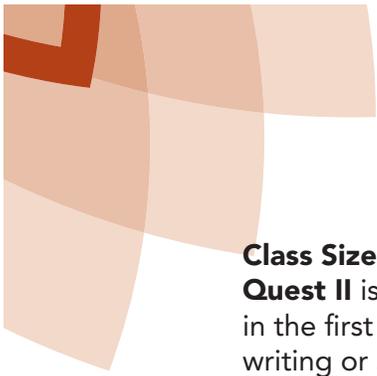
In addition to furthering the aims of a **Liberal Education** (like all courses in the USP), the **Quest II** course also begins to address the responsibility of "Ethical Reasoning" (with the "Ethical Action" component of that **Essential Learning Outcome** addressed more specifically in **Quest III**). As the **Quest II** course introduces broad disciplinary questions as well as content that emanates from focused study of the selected **Signature Question**, students gain awareness of central ethical issues experienced by practitioners in that discipline. In its description of ethical reasoning, the AAC&U recommends that students "recognize ethical issues in a variety of settings." Likewise, in **Quest II** classes, ethical reasoning can be broadly construed—from the deliberation of issues and claims to engagement with the driving or pressing questions within each academic field. The **Quest II** course exposes students to the process of reasoning within the stated focus of the course.

Signature Questions:

- Students select a **Quest II** course with a different **Signature Question** from that which they addressed in **Quest I**.
- The **Quest II** course must include "significant engagement" with the **Signature Question** linked to it. "Significant engagement" is defined as an apparent focus and/or integration of the content into a minimum of 30 to 50 percent of the course. (The minimum **SQ** content in **Quest I** is 25 percent; this percentage is lower than **Quest II** and **III** because **Quest I** courses must also incorporate the First-Year Experience elements.)

Evidence of significant engagement with the **Signature Question** content includes relevant student learning outcomes and graded assignments and is intended to be apparent in the course syllabus.

- Each semester, **Quest II** courses are offered in all three **Signature Questions** (with approximately one-third of the courses dedicated to each of the three **Signature Questions**).
- If the **Quest II** course focuses upon the **Intercultural Knowledge Signature Question**, that class is designated as either an Ethnic Studies or Non-Western Culture course (whichever is appropriate), supporting another USP goal of developing students' global learning and their responsibility as citizens of an increasingly diverse world.
- **QUEST** instructors (**I, II, and III**) are supported by ongoing collaborative professional development to assist with the curricular modification necessary to integrate **Signature Question** content into their courses (if such content is not already present in the proposed course).



Class Size and Co-Enrollment

Quest II is paired with whichever **Quest** writing or speaking course the student did not take in the first semester. As in **Quest I**, students' concurrent enrollment in **Quest II** and the **Quest** writing or speaking course in their second semester will form a new learning community. Each **Quest II** course is capped at 50 students, because it is paired with two sections of the **Quest** speaking or writing course (each capped at 25 students) to form the learning community. For **Quest II** lab science courses, a learning community is formed through co-enrollment of the lab section with the speaking or writing course (note that the lecture section for a **Quest II** science course may maintain enrollments of greater than 50 students).

Assessment

The **Quest II** course assesses student learning in terms of ethical reasoning and the understanding of content related to the discipline and the **Signature Question**. Instructors are free to determine the assessment tools for individual elements of the course, but learning artifacts (papers, speeches, lab reports, etc.) are appropriate for inclusion in students' **ePortfolios**. Rubrics related to the student learning outcomes of **Quest II** are available for use by the USP teaching community on the USP webpage. Case studies are commonly used to teach and to assess students' ability to recognize ethical issues.

Outcomes

1. Students will be engaged in a learning community through their co-enrollment in a writing or speaking course and a paired disciplinary **Quest II** course.
2. Students will develop an awareness of ethical issues and the process of reasoning about them in a specific discipline and/or arena of intellectual inquiry. This introduction to ethical reasoning will serve as a foundation for further learning related to ethical reasoning and action in other USP courses and in courses in students' majors and minors, as applicable.
3. Students will continue to cultivate personal responsibility for their intellectual development by archiving learning artifacts in the **ePortfolio**.

Resources

For instructional support, see the USP Teaching Resources webpage on the CETL website (www.uwosh.edu/grants/cetl).

Appendix C: Quest III Parameters

Quest III and the Community Engagement Component

Quest III is a disciplinary course that integrates content related to one of the three **Signature Questions (SQs)** and includes a community engagement project. Students take this third course in the **QUEST** sequence in either the first or second semester of the sophomore year. The **Quest III** course is not paired with another course and enrollment is capped at 50 students. The community engagement project encompasses 14 to 20 hours of **campus or community** experiential learning related to the **Signature Question** of the course. In order to identify as **Quest III**, courses must include the following characteristics, in addition to their disciplinary content.

Liberal Education and Essential Learning Outcomes

Through the community engagement project, the course stresses to students that a **Liberal Education** addresses real-world challenges through active engagement with the communities in which they live. The **Quest III** project is also connected to the “Ethical Action” component of the **Essential Learning Outcome** “Ethical Reasoning and Action,” which the AAC&U describes as “anchored through active involvement with diverse communities and real-world challenges.” The purpose of the community engagement project is thus to connect all students to the community, on or off campus, early in their college career to enhance their civic knowledge and provide them with an introductory experience in civic engagement.

Signature Questions

- Students select a **Quest III** course with whichever **Signature Question** they did not take in their first academic year.
- The **Quest III** course is expected to include “significant engagement” with the **Signature Question** linked to it. “Significant engagement” is defined as an apparent focus and/or integration of the content into a minimum of 30 to 50 percent of the course. (The minimum **SQ** content in **Quest I** remains 25 percent; this percentage is lower than **Quest II** and **III** because **Quest I** courses must also incorporate the First-Year Experience elements.)

Evidence of significant engagement with the **Signature Question** content includes relevant student learning outcomes and graded assignments and is intended to be apparent in the course syllabus.

- The community engagement project must be connected to the **Signature Question**
- If the **Quest III** course focuses upon the **Intercultural Knowledge Signature Question**, that class will be designated as either an Ethnic Studies or Non-Western Culture course (whichever is appropriate), supporting another USP goal of developing students’ global learning and their responsibility as citizens of an increasingly diverse world.
- **QUEST** instructors (**I, II, and III**) are supported by collaborative and ongoing professional development to assist with the curricular modification necessary to integrate **Signature Question** content into their courses (if such content is not already present in the proposed course).



Overview of the Community Engagement Project: Community Partnerships

Community-based (or service) learning is a high-impact practice, demonstrated to affect student retention and academic success. Though students may have more substantive civic engagement experiences in their major coursework (e.g. internships), the **Quest III** project will introduce students to civic action, community partners, and real-world challenges.

Types of Community Partnerships

Quest III students can partner with businesses; non-profit organizations; civic associations; public schools, colleges and universities; health and human service organizations; government organizations, or UW Oshkosh campus organizations. On an ongoing basis, options for types of projects are collaboratively constructed, connections with campus and community groups (and mechanisms for interaction between them) are established, and logistical support is provided for **Quest III**.

Project Organization

To ensure maximum flexibility for instructors in **Quest III**, the community engagement project can be organized in a variety of ways, including:

- one project for the entire class with either one community partner or multiple partners;
- multiple projects with small groups of students, with one or multiple community partner(s);
- individual student projects determined by students, with instructor pre-approval and documentation;
- a participant-observational research project with some direct action.

During the course design, the instructor can decide the organization of the project. The form of the project as well as the community partner can be determined either by the instructor or student, depending on the instructor's preference. The project might be supervised or unsupervised, depending on the preference of the instructor. For example, the instructor and the students might participate together in a whole class project organized in advance by the instructor or the instructor might provide a list of appropriate options for students' individual projects, requiring documentation of service and a structured learning outcome (e.g. paper or speech).

Alumni Mentors

All **Quest III** courses are assigned an alumni mentor (or mentors) for the community engagement portion of the course. These mentors enhance students' connection to the community through on- and off-campus outreach projects and service opportunities. Mentors facilitate connections with community service agencies and/or supplement faculty supervision of community engagement projects. Alumni mentors undergo a training program and are appropriately matched with **Quest III** courses based upon skill set, disciplinary background and community connections

Project Support

To assist with community engagement projects, instructors are provided with the support of a Community Engagement Project Coordinator. In addition, ongoing professional development for **Quest III** instructors is available to support project ideas.

Assessment

In order to facilitate assessment, the community engagement project has a clear connection to course content. The instructor assesses learning through students' ability to connect the course content with the action and practice involved in the community engagement experience.

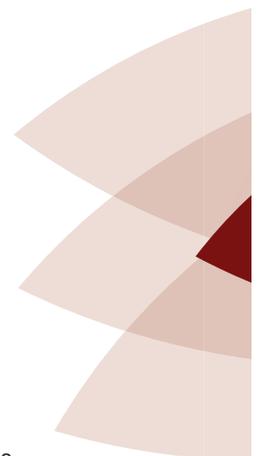
This assessment can happen in multiple ways; for example, student blogs, media presentations, journal writing, speeches, or research papers. A central component of such assessment often includes students' reflection on their community engagement experience. Learning artifacts from these projects are appropriate for inclusion in the students' **ePortfolios**.

Outcomes

1. Students will develop further connections to the university and/or the local community through a community-engagement project.
2. Students will engage in action with immediate benefits and develop the ability to discern the applicability of academic knowledge in real-world settings.
3. Students will be able to reflect on the relationship between their educational experiences and their actions within communities.
4. Through interaction, students will develop empathy for community members.
5. Students will expand their personal responsibility for their intellectual development by archiving learning artifacts in the **ePortfolio**.

Resources

For instructional support, see the USP Teaching Resources webpage on the CETL website (www.uwosh.edu/grants/cetl).





Appendix D: UW Oshkosh Essential Learning Outcomes

Charged in 2007, the **Liberal Education Reform Team** (LERT) adapted the AAC&U definition of **Liberal Education** for our campus: **Liberal Education** is a philosophy of education that empowers individuals with broad knowledge and transferable skills, and a strong sense of values, ethics, and civic engagement. These broad goals have endured even as the courses and requirements that comprise a **Liberal Education** have changed over the years. Characterized by challenging encounters with important and relevant issues today and throughout history, a **Liberal Education** prepares graduates both for socially valued work and for civic leadership in their society. It usually includes a general education curriculum that provides broad exposure to multiple disciplines and ways of knowing, along with more in-depth study in at least one field or area of concentration.

Original source: Advocacy "What is a liberal education?" www.aacu.org/leap.

Knowledge of Human Cultures and the Physical and Natural World

- Through study in fine and performing arts, humanities, mathematics and science, and social science focused by engagement with big questions, both contemporary and enduring

Skills, Both Intellectual and Practical

- Identification and objective evaluation of theories and assumptions
- Critical and creative thinking
- Written and oral communication
- Quantitative literacy
- Technology and information literacy
- Teamwork, leadership, and problem solving practiced extensively, across the curriculum, in the context of progressively more challenging problems, projects, and standards for performance

Responsibility, as Individuals and Communities

- Knowledge of **Sustainability and Its Applications**
- **Civic Knowledge and Engagement**—local and global
- **Intercultural Knowledge and Competence**
- Ethical reasoning and action
- Foundations and skills for lifelong learning developed through real-world challenges and active involvement with diverse communities

Learning: Integrated, Synthesized, and Advanced

- Synthesis and advanced accomplishment across general and specialized studies demonstrated through the application of knowledge, skills, and responsibilities to new settings and complex problems

Source: Learning Outcomes are adapted from AAC&U report, *College Learning for a New Global Century*.

Appendix E: High-Impact Practices

High-Impact Educational Practice

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 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.

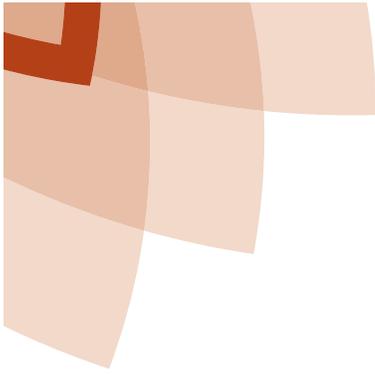


Table 1
Relationships between Selected High-Impact Activities, Deep Learning, and Self-Reported Gains

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

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

Table 2
Relationships between Selected High-Impact Activities and Clusters of Effective Educational Practices

	Level of Academic Challenge	Active and Collaborative Learning	Student-Faculty Interaction	Supportive Campus Environment
First-Year				
Learning Communities	++	+++	+++	++
Service Learning	++	+++	+++	++
Senior				
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). For information and more resources and research from LEAP, see www.aacu.org/leap.

