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 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 (2001), 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.