

THE GEMs DESIGN PRINCIPLES FOR GENERAL EDUCATION *

PROFICIENCY

Colleges and universities should provide clear statements of desired learning outcomes for all students. Similarly, general education, in all institutional and alternative settings, should provide programs, curricula, and experiences that lead to the development of demonstrable, portable proficiencies aligned to widely valued areas of twenty-first-century knowledge and skill. Students should achieve and demonstrate progressively higher levels of proficiency through problem-centered work on significant issues relevant to their interests and aims.

AGENCY AND SELF-DIRECTION

General education should play a critical role in helping *all* students understand, pursue, and develop the proficiencies needed for work, life, and responsible citizenship. Students should be active participants in creating an educational plan in which they identify and produce high-quality work on significant questions relevant to their interests and aims. Undergraduate education should enable students to understand the intellectual and personal capacities they are developing that will help them achieve their educational and professional goals, enrich their lives, and act in principled and constructive ways, both as individuals and in their roles in society.

INTEGRATIVE LEARNING AND PROBLEM-BASED INQUIRY

Students should develop and demonstrate proficiency through a combination and integration of curricular, cocurricular, and community-based learning, as well as prior learning experiences, including in institutions and in local, global, and virtual communities and networks. Students should demonstrate proficiencies through inquiry into unscripted questions and problems that are relevant to their interests and aims and where a full understanding of the problem requires insights from multiple areas of study.

EQUITY

General education programs should be equity-minded (see page 9) in design and implementation. This requires a cognitive shift in the ways faculty and administrators understand and address inequalities in outcomes among students of color, students with disabilities, low-income and first-generation students, returning adult students, veterans, and others. General education programs should advance practices and policies that are aimed at achieving the full spectrum of learning outcomes for all students regardless of their backgrounds.

TRANSPARENCY AND ASSESSMENT

Students, faculty members, and other stakeholders should understand what proficiencies are being developed in any general education program, course, or activity, and how these proficiencies can be demonstrated at key milestones in students' progress toward the degree. Students and institutions should be able to point to students' work, especially their "Signature Work" in problem- and project-based inquiry, as demonstrations of proficiency worthy of credit across institutional settings and as a body of work associated with earning the degree.

* SOURCE: *General Education Maps and Markers: Designing Meaningful Pathways to Student Achievement*. (Washington, DC, AAC&U, 2015).