

The UW System Shared Learning Goals

A Commitment to Shared Learning Goals for All UW Undergraduates

Brief summary

While respecting the individual missions of each UW System institution and the goals of their respective bachelor degree programs, the UW System Shared Learning Goals provide a framework to communicate broadly the meaning and value of a college education. The Shared Learning Goals represent the UW System's commitment to prepare students to be competent citizens in the 21st-century, knowledge-based, global society. They may be useful when campus members speak to various audiences about the value and purpose of the undergraduate degree, particularly those outside the university community. Within the university, the Shared Learning Goals may be useful for faculty, academic leaders, and staff in their ongoing work to guide liberal education initiatives, design coursework distinctive to each institution, and support professional development for faculty and instructional staff. The UW System Shared Learning Goals recognize and build upon—but do not replace—the important work of faculty at each UW institution.

What are the UW System Shared Learning Goals?

- **Knowledge of Human Cultures and the Natural World** including breadth of knowledge and the ability to think beyond one's discipline, major, or area of concentration. This knowledge can be gained through the study of the arts, humanities, languages, sciences, and social sciences.
- **Critical and Creative Thinking Skills** including inquiry, problem solving, and higher-order qualitative and quantitative reasoning.
- **Effective Communication Skills** including listening, speaking, reading, writing, and information literacy.
- **Intercultural Knowledge and Competence** including the ability to interact and work with people from diverse backgrounds and cultures; to lead or contribute support to those who lead; and to empathize with and understand those who are different than they are.
- **Individual, Social, and Environmental Responsibility** including civic knowledge and engagement (both local and global), ethical reasoning, and action.

How were they developed?

In 2007, a Shared Learning Goals Committee of faculty representing each of the UW System institutions was formed to develop the Shared Learning Goals based on the learning goals in place at each of the UW institutions. The UW System Board of Regents endorsed the UW System's Shared Learning Goals for Baccalaureate Students at its December 2008 meeting. At the time, the *Commitment to the Shared Learning Goals* constituted the first action step of the *Growth Agenda for Wisconsin*, the System's strategic framework.

As background, the UW System Shared Learning Goals embrace the definition of liberal education developed by the American Association of Colleges and Universities (AAC&U), a definition informed by that group's dialogue with hundreds of colleges, universities, and business and civic leaders. The AAC&U report "College Learning for the New Global Century" (January 2007) can be viewed at http://www.aacu.org/advocacy/leap/documents/GlobalCentury_final.pdf.

The UW System Shared Learning Goals are informed by AAC&U's [Essential Learning Outcomes](#).