LEAP Lexicon

LEAP is a big tent, with many sub-initiatives and projects that belong inside it, each with their own acronyms.

LEAP IS A BIG TENT!

ELOS, HIPs, VALUE rubrics, Inclusive Excellence, DQP/Tuning, GEMS, Signature Work

The following definitions and descriptions are culled from a variety of sources, including AAC&U and UW System.

**Liberal Education**
An approach to learning that empowers individuals and prepares them to deal with complexity, diversity, and change. It provides students with broad knowledge of the wider world (e.g. science, culture, and society) as well as in-depth study in a specific area of interest. A liberal education helps students develop a sense of social responsibility, as well as strong and transferable intellectual and practical skills such as communication, analytical and problem-solving skills, and a demonstrated ability to apply knowledge and skills in real-world settings.

**Liberal Arts & Sciences**
The specific disciplines that make up the traditional undergraduate curriculum, including the arts, humanities, sciences, and social sciences. Historically, the modern Liberal Arts curriculum developed from the classical *Artes Liberales*, consisting of the trivium (grammar, logic, and rhetoric) and the quadrivium (arithmetic, geometry, astronomy, and music).

**General Education**
That part of a liberal education curriculum that is shared by all students. It provides broad exposure to multiple disciplines and forms the basis for developing essential intellectual, civic, and practical capacities. General education can take many forms, and increasingly includes introductory, advanced, and integrative forms of learning.

**LEAP**
Launched in 2005, Liberal Education and America’s Promise (LEAP) is a national public advocacy and campus action initiative of the Association of American Colleges & Universities (AAC&U). LEAP champions the importance of a twenty-first-century liberal education—for individual students and for a nation dependent on economic creativity and democratic vitality. [https://www.aacu.org/leap](https://www.aacu.org/leap)
**LEAP States**
Because of the UW System’s work on liberal education, Wisconsin was named the first LEAP State by AAC&U in 2005. There are now 12 formally designated LEAP States, along with several consortial partners. The LEAP States Initiative offers educators in states, state systems, and consortia an array of opportunities to work together. LEAP States supports large-scale collaboration, transformational change, and educational alignment to raise the quality of college learning within and across states. The initiative works with the LEAP framework, advancing essential learning outcomes, high-impact practices, and assessment for general and liberal education. [https://www.aacu.org/leap/states](https://www.aacu.org/leap/states)

**LEAP Wisconsin**
The umbrella term for more than a decade-old change initiative in the University of Wisconsin System focused on quality and student success. The initiative strengthens how UW institutions deliver on the promise we make to students and the citizens of Wisconsin to provide high-quality higher education to help students lead engaged and fulfilling professional, civic, and personal lives.

**LEAP Challenge**
As part of AAC&U’s ongoing Liberal Education and America’s Promise (LEAP) initiative, AAC&U recently released The LEAP Challenge—calling on colleges and universities to engage students in Signature Work that will prepare them to integrate and apply their learning to a significant project with meaning to the student and to society.

**LEAP Campus Toolkit**
AAC&U [website](https://www.aacu.org) containing resources and models for campus practice and innovation, curated from AAC&U research, staff and collaboration with hundreds of faculty and staff at colleges, universities, and higher education organizations across the country.

**Making Excellence Inclusive**
AAC&U’s guiding principle for access, student success, and high-quality learning, grounded in research on student learning and the educational benefits of diversity as a constituent component of excellence. It is designed to help colleges and universities integrate diversity, equity, and educational quality efforts into their missions and institutional operations.

**Inclusive Excellence**
The UW System’s framework for diversity, equity and inclusion. Inclusive Excellence was designed as a planning process intended to help each UW System institution establish a comprehensive and well-coordinated set of systemic actions that focus specifically on fostering greater diversity, equity, inclusion, and accountability at every level of university life. The central premise of Inclusive Excellence holds that UW System colleges and universities need to intentionally integrate their diversity efforts into the core aspects of their institutions—such as their academic priorities, leadership, quality improvement initiatives, decision-making, day-to-day operations, and organizational cultures—in order to maximize their success.

**Equity**
*Equity refers not just to equal access, but to equal outcomes* among all racial and ethnic student groups in institutions of higher education. These outcomes include persistence through developmental and basic skills education, transfer from two- to four-year institutions, and degree and certificate attainment. For example, when the representation of students graduating—an *outcome*—mirrors their representation in the student body—*access*—, then we have achieved equity for that particular outcome. Equity-Mindedness refers to the outlook, perspective or mode of thinking exhibited by practitioners and others who call attention to patterns of inequity in student outcomes, and are willing to assume personal and institutional responsibility for the elimination of inequity. This includes being “color conscious,” noticing differences in experience among racial-ethnic groups, and being willing to talk about race and ethnicity as an aspect of equity. Equity
perspectives are evident in actions, language, problem-framing, problem-solving, and cultural practices. (Bensimon, 2008).

**Essential Learning Outcomes**
The LEAP campaign is organized around a robust set of "Essential Learning Outcomes"—all of which are best developed by a contemporary liberal education. The AAC&U's ELOs represent a guiding vision and national benchmarks for college learning and liberal education in the 21st century. 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 and Applied 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.

**UW System Shared Learning Goals**
The UW System's set of shared learning goals, adopted in 2008 and derived from AAC&U's Essential Learning Outcomes. The five shared learning goals represent the University of Wisconsin’s commitment to prepare students to be competent citizens in the 21st-century, knowledge-based, global society. They are:

- Knowledge of Human Cultures and the Natural World;
- Critical and Creative Thinking Skills;
- Effective Communication Skills;
- Intercultural Knowledge and Competence; and
- Individual, Social, and Environmental Responsibility.

**SAGLA**
The System Advisory Group on the Liberal Arts, the network of UW faculty and staff convened in 2004 to promote the purpose, value, and opportunity inherent in liberal education. SAGLA members have played lead roles in developing LEAP Wisconsin.

**High-Impact Practices (HIPs)**
Intentional, purposeful learning experiences that deepen student learning and engagement, raise levels of performance, retention and success for all students, and increase student retention and program completion. These practices include First-Year Seminars and Experiences, Common Intellectual Experiences that combine curricular and co-curricular options for students, Learning Communities, Writing-Intensive Courses, Collaborative Assignments and Projects, Undergraduate Research, Diversity/Global Learning, Service and Community-Based Learning, Internships, and Capstone Courses and Projects. The set of high-impact practices or HIPs are derived from AAC&U-sponsored research into student learning. https://www.aacu.org/resources/high-impact-practices

VALUE Rubrics
VALUE rubrics are derived from VALUE (Valid Assessment of Learning in Undergraduate Education), a campus-based assessment initiative sponsored by AAC&U as part of its Liberal Education and America’s Promise (LEAP) initiative. VALUE rubrics are scoring guides that use students own authentic work to assess and measure various levels of student learning across the LEAP Essential learning outcomes. The sixteen VALUE rubrics were created by faculty across the United States and a rubric exists for each of the ELOs. Many UW institutions have adapted the VALUE rubrics and/or created their own, keyed to their campus- or program-specific implementation of the ELOs. To learn more and see what rubrics are available for free downloads, go to: https://www.aacu.org/value.

Give Students a Compass
In the Compass project, three UW System institutions—UW-Eau Claire, UW-Milwaukee and UW-Oshkosh—focused on general education reform through more engaged teaching and learning, with a particular emphasis on providing high-impact practices (HIPs) to historically underrepresented students. The grant was led by AAC&U and included two other state systems, the California State University and the Oregon University System (since reconfigured).

Quality Collaboratives
Led by AAC&U with funding from Lumina Foundation for Higher Education, this grant project engaged four UW campuses (UW-Fox Valley in partnership with UW-Oshkosh, and UW-Waukesha in partnership with UW-Parkside), along with campuses from nine other state systems, in creating better—through more outcomes-based—transfer pathways for students moving from two-year to four-year institutions.

Faculty Collaboratives
Sponsored by AAC&U, with funding from Lumina Foundation for Higher Education, Faculty Collaboratives is focused on creating a state-based, faculty-led Innovation Hub (developed by project leads at UW-Parkside), dedicated to advancing curricular reforms that lead to deeper student engagement, and higher retention and graduation rates. The UW System is one of five state higher education systems making up the first cohort of participants. For the UW System, this is a synthesizing project, focused on the learning gained from participation in previous AAC&U grants, and applying the family of proficiency initiatives at the heart of LEAP.

Proficiency Initiatives
The name given to the family of outcomes-based student learning and educational attainment initiatives developed by AAC&U in partnership with colleges and universities, and funders, across the country. All of these projects are focused on helping all students, especially those who have been historically underserved by higher education, learn most effectively and demonstrate and apply their learning outside the classroom, grounded in the Essential Learning Outcomes (the UW System’s Shared Learning Goals), those adaptive, cross-cutting, inquiry-based capacities necessary for economic and civic flourishing.

Signature Work
Students' Signature Work refers to challenging higher education to prepare all students to complete a substantial cross-disciplinary project in a topic significant to the student and society, as part of the expected pathway to a degree. The signature project can take one of many forms (e.g. capstone, internship, field work, research, community-based research).
**Degree Qualifications Profile**

The [Degree Qualifications Profile (DQP)](https://www.luminafoundation.org/dqp) is a framework developed by Lumina Foundation, with the input of higher education leaders from around the country, focused on defining the high-quality learning that college degrees should signify at the *associate, bachelor’s, and master’s degree levels*. The DQP outlines a set of reference points for what students should know and be able to do upon completion of associate, bachelor’s and master’s degrees—in any field of study.

**Tuning**

Like the DQP, [Tuning](https://www.tuning.org) is a faculty-driven process that identifies what a student should know and be able to do *in a chosen discipline* when a degree has been earned. Participants from four-year and two-year colleges and universities identify the essential learning in the discipline. Tuning invites stakeholders (faculty, students, recent graduates, and employers) to have input into the process and yields a framework that results in clear learning expectations for students, in order to better establish the quality and relevance of degrees in various academic disciplines.

**GEMs**

AAC&U's [GEMS](https://www.aacu.org/gems) project (*General Education Maps and Markers*) represents a large-scale, systematic effort to develop a portable and proficiency-based framework for general education. GEMs is designed to develop principles through which institutions of higher education can create general education curricula that focus on core proficiencies, intentional educational pathways within and across institutions, and students’ engagement in work that allows assessment of their demonstrated accomplishments in inquiry- and problem-based learning.

**MSC-VALUE Rubric Project**

The [Multistate Collaborative to Advance Learning Outcomes Assessment (MSC)](https://sheeo.org) - a partnership among the [State Higher Education Executive Officers’ association (SHEEO)](https://sheeo.org) and nine state higher education systems and 59 two- and four-year public campuses in those states to establish baseline information on student performance across the Essential Learning Outcomes. In its pilot year, the project has demonstrated that rubric-based assessment can be taken to scale and, using students’ authentic work, produce valid and actionable findings about student learning. Participating campuses are collecting samples of student work from students approaching completion of their academic programs; submitting them along with student demographic information to a nationwide VALUE database; and having them evaluated by a group of faculty scorers using select VALUE rubrics. Additional states will participate in the second, demonstration year of the project.

**Competency-based Education (CBE)**

Competency-based education (CBE) awards college credit based on competency—the knowledge, skills and abilities students can demonstrate—not classroom time. It represents a deep commitment to outcomes-based learning. The [UW System’s competency-based educational programs](https://www.wisc.edu/academics/programs/online/credit-for-prior-learning/) are designed to serve the hundreds of thousands of Wisconsin residents with some college credits but no degree through convenient delivery models. The [UW Flexible Option](https://www.wisc.edu/academics/programs/online/credit-for-prior-learning/) is a pioneer in offering CBE. The UW System also had a robust “credit-for-prior learning” program.