GENERAL EDUCATION MAPS AND MARKERS (GEMs)

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INTRODUCING GEMs: FROM CONTEXT TO CONTENT

• In the context of national needs: economic, civic, developmental.

• In the context of national, state, and “local” higher education reform efforts, glimpses and pieces of GEMs.

• Content: what is GEMs, what are its goals, and how is it related to the transfer problem?
**GEMs AND THE COMPLETION/QUALITY AGENDA**

- Economic needs: productivity/opportunity.
- Civic needs: an educated citizenry and social justice.
- Individual needs: personal development and a full life.

*These needs are not being fully met and cannot be met without a quality liberal education accessible to all. GEMs seeks to advance the completion/quality agenda and help meet these needs.*
WHAT KIND OF “QUALITY”?

- Employer surveys: broad skills and knowledge, preparation for a career beyond a job. The “barista” myth and career outcomes.

- Civic needs: social responsibility, “wicked problems,” and Dancing With Robots

- Gallup: personal development, academic experiences, and “flourishing.”

- In short: a liberal education.
GEMs IN THE CONTEXT OF HIGHER EDUCATION

- The “e pluribus unum” problem: how do you create coherence and assure quality in a diffuse, decentralized sector (institutional diversity and autonomy, academic freedom)?

- The problems compounded: technology, student “swirl,” new student demographics.

- Alternative (competing?) levers for (any?) change: self/professional regulation, public policy, markets and technological “disruption.”
GEMs IN CONTEXT: AAC&U NATIONAL EFFORTS

• **Outcomes:** The Degree Qualification Profile (DQP) proficiencies/outcomes for students at various levels (further development of AAC&U Essential Learning Outcomes—ELOs).

• **Assessment:** VALUE rubrics for assessing liberal education outcomes based on actual student work.
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AAC&U Initiatives Foundational to the Development of GEMS/VALUE 2008-2013

**General Education Maps and Markers (GEMS)**
A portable and competency-based framework for general education and transfer that helps students’ achievement of key learning outcomes.

**Valid Assessment of Learning in Undergraduate Education (VALUE)**
Development of a quality assurance framework to help institutions, systems, and accreditors determine to what degree students are making progress toward the expected competencies, and whether students meet graduation-level standards for demonstrated achievement.

### GEMs IN CONTEXT:
**NATIONAL EFFORTS**

**Give Students a Compass 2008 – 2011**
New designs for general education and transfer in three state systems, with a special focus on inclusive excellence.
- Carnegie Corporation of NY
- Lumina Foundation

**The Roadmap Project 2010 – present**
Community colleges working to develop proactive programs of academic support—tied to expected learning outcomes—that engage students at entrance and help them become active partners in their own quest for educational success.
- Metlife Foundation

**Assessing High-Impact Learning for Underserved Students 2012 – present**
Investigation of the impact of engaged learning on traditionally underrepresented populations, specifically first-generation, minority, and low-income students.
- TG Philanthropy Program

**The Quality Collaboratives 2011 – present**
Nine state systems engaged in an effort to clarify, map, assess, and improve the achievement of learning outcomes across two- and four-year institutions, using the DQP to explore how the intended learning can be achieved and assessed.
- Lumina Foundation
- Hewlett Foundation

### Liberal Education and America’s Promise (LEAP)
2005 – present
National advocacy, campus action, and assessment initiative designed to build support for, and use of, essential learning outcomes, high-impact practices, authentic assessments of student learning, and inclusive excellence as a guiding principle for higher education.

Multiple funders, including many of those above and also the Christian A. Johnson Endeavor Foundation, the Charles Engelhard Foundation, the Teagle Foundation, State Farm Insurance Company, and individual donors.
INTRODUCING GEMs
A FEW WORDS

“In partnership with a broad spectrum of public and private institutions GEMs will map DQP proficiencies across student learning experiences and develop pathways for a holistic cornerstone-to-capstone focus on high impact practices, inquiry- and problem-centered projects, and increasing levels of challenge. Along these intentional pathways, students will demonstrate their accomplishments through signature assignments and projects.”
“GEMs is keyed to the proficiencies that have been broadly articulated through Liberal Education and America’s Promise (LEAP) and in the Degree Qualifications Profile. GEMs will help students develop the adaptive, cross-cutting, inquiry-based capacities necessary for economic, civic, and personal flourishing.”
WHAT IS GEMs? SOME KEY IDEAS AND DRIVERS (“SPECS”)

- Proficiency/competency: quality as “non-negotiable” with or without credit hours—for all students.

- Transfer, “swirl,” and completion: transferring quality as well as credit—for all students.

- Integration: curricular, co-curricular, community; a more coherent, holistic student experience—for all students.

- Transparency: clarity about purpose and outcomes for all stakeholders; authentic assessment and portfolios.
NEW DESIGNS, PRACTICES: (MAPS AND MARKERS?)

- Curricular pathways: integrative, thematic study “cornerstone to capstone.” (all)

- Inquiry/problem-based learning: meaningful problems/”big questions,” engaged work in research and application/internships. (all)

- The importance and use of (“signature”) assignments—demonstrating proficiency. (all)

- HIPs infused curricula and programs. (all)
The split logic of the learning paradigm

Disintegrative (granular):
- Design of discrete experiences
- Outcomes driven
- Competency-based
- Focus on what’s measureable
- Learning decoupled from formal boundaries

Integrative (holistic, coherent):
- Design of whole learning experiences
- Curricular and co-curricular
- Competencies conceived as part of a whole vision of learning
- Connections
- Formation
INTRODUCING THE DQP AND GEMS

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