Whither Character Development

Story Lines from NSSE and Employers in an Era of Accountability

George D. Kuh
We all want the same thing—an undergraduate experience for all students that results in high levels of learning and personal development including character.
“There are lots of ethicists in the house. We need only to build institutional structures and expectations that will encourage them to get to work.”

Character

- What people believe and value
- How they think
- What they do
Overview

- What the world needs now
- What matters to character development during college
- Can high-impact practices make a difference?
- Implications
The Promise

An educational experience resulting in “a reinvigorated liberal education of high quality for all students” (p. 10), one that “prepares them for personal success and fosters a just, democratic society” (p. 21).
The Promise

“For students to engage intellectually and seriously with what is taught… [leading to] deep learning…the ability to defend positions…”

to “write well and think clearly…”

to develop “rational and reflective minds, open to continuous learning…” (pp. 8-9)
"The Promise"

"to develop a coherent constellation of integrated values and ethical principles...."
College Learning for the New Global Century

A Report from the National Leadership Council for Liberal Education & America’s Promise

Association of American Colleges and Universities
Narrow Learning is Not Enough: The Essential Learning Outcomes

- **Knowledge of Human Cultures and the Physical & Natural World**
- **Intellectual, Practical & Technical Skills**
- **Personal and Social Responsibility**
- **“Deep” Integrative Learning**
Personal & Social Responsibility

- Civic knowledge and engagement—local and global
- Intercultural knowledge and competence
- Ethical reasoning and action
- Humanitarian, allocentric sensibilities
“Deep learning is learning that takes root in our apparatus of understanding, in the embedded meanings that define us and that we use to define the world.”

Deep, Integrative Learning

- Attend to the underlying meaning of information as well as content
- Integrate and synthesize different ideas, sources of information
- Discern patterns in evidence or phenomena
- Apply knowledge in different situations
- View issues from multiple perspectives
Raising The Bar

Employers’ Views On College Learning In The Wake Of The Economic Downturn

Key findings from survey among 302 employers
Conducted October 27 – November 17, 2009

for

Association of American Colleges and Universities
Employers’ expectations of employees have increased.

% who agree with each statement

Our company is asking employees to **take on more responsibilities** and to **use a broader set of skills** than in the past

Employees are expected to **work harder to coordinate with other departments** than in the past

The **challenges** employees face within our company are **more complex today** than they were in the past

To succeed in our company, employees need **higher levels of learning and knowledge** today than they did in the past
Employers’ Top Priorities for Student Learning In College

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Skill/Quality/Development</th>
<th>% of Respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Effective oral/written communication</td>
<td>89%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Critical thinking/analytical reasoning</td>
<td>81%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge/skills applied to real world settings</td>
<td>79%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Analyze/solve complex problems</td>
<td>75%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Connect choices and actions to ethical decisions</td>
<td>75%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teamwork skills/ability to collaborate</td>
<td>71%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ability to innovate and be creative</td>
<td>70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Developments in science/technology</td>
<td>70%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

% saying two- and four-year colleges should place MORE emphasis on helping students develop these skills, qualities, capabilities, knowledge.
### Other Areas Of Learning Needing More Emphasis

% saying two- and four-year colleges should emphasize MORE helping students develop in these areas

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Locate/organize/evaluate information</td>
<td>68%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understand global context</td>
<td>67%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Global issues’ implications for future</td>
<td>65%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understand &amp; work with statistics</td>
<td>63%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understand role of U.S. in the world</td>
<td>57%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge of cultural diversity in US/world</td>
<td>57%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Civic knowledge, community engagement</td>
<td>52%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foreign language proficiency</td>
<td>45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understand, apply democratic values</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
What Really Matters in College:

Student Engagement

Because individual effort and involvement are the critical determinants of college impact, institutions should focus on the ways they can shape their academic, interpersonal, and extracurricular offerings to encourage student engagement.

Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005, p. 602
Student Engagement Trifecta

- What students do -- time and energy devoted to educationally purposeful activities
- What institutions do -- using effective educational practices to induce students to do the right things
- Educationally effective institutions channel student energy toward the right activities
Good Practices in Undergraduate Education
(Chickering & Gamson, 1987; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005)

✓ Student-faculty contact
✓ Active learning
✓ Prompt feedback
✓ Time on task
✓ High expectations
✓ Respect for diverse learning styles
✓ Cooperation among students
National Survey of Student Engagement  
(pronounced “nessie”)  

Community College Survey of Student Engagement  
(pronounced “cessie”)  

College student surveys that assess the extent to which students engage in educational practices associated with high levels of learning and development
Effective Educational Practices

- Level of Academic Challenge
- Active & Collaborative Learning
- Enriching Educational Experiences
- Supportive Campus Environment
- Student-Faculty Interaction
Grades, persistence, student satisfaction, gains across a range of desired outcomes, and engagement go hand in hand.
Both the NSSE benchmark and deep learning scales are...significantly and positively linked to ... effective reasoning and problem solving, well being, inclination to inquire and lifelong learning, intercultural effectiveness, leadership, and moral character... These associations persisted even after introducing controls for important confounding influences.

Pascarella et al., 2009 reporting on the Wabash National Study of Liberal Arts Education (WNSLAE)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Academic Challenge</th>
<th>Active &amp; Collaborative Learning</th>
<th>Supportive Campus Environment</th>
<th>Enriching Educational Experience</th>
<th>Student-Faculty Interaction</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Critical Thinking</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contribution to Science</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contribution to the Arts</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political/Social Involvement</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic Motivation</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
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<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Well-Being</td>
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<tr>
<td>Need for Cognition</td>
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<td>Good Teaching</td>
<td>Academic Challenge</td>
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<td>NSSE Deep Learning</td>
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</table>
Essential Learning Outcome: NSSE Deep/Integrative Learning

- Integrating ideas or information from various sources
- Included diverse perspectives in class discussions/writing
- Put together ideas from different courses
- Discussed ideas with faculty members outside of class
- Discussed ideas with others outside of class
- Analyzing the basic elements of an idea, experience, or theory

- Synthesizing & organizing ideas, info., or experiences
- Making judgments about the value of information
- Applying theories to practical problems or in new situations
- Examined the strengths and weaknesses of your own views
- Tried to better understand someone else's views
- Learned something that changed how you understand an issue
It’s more complicated than this…

- Many of the effects of college are “conditional”
- Some are compensatory
- Some have unusually positive effects
Whither Character Development?

- Predispositions to change
- Accentuation effects
- Individual transformation
Character

- What people believe and value
- How they think
- What they do
Character Development

- Knowledge of self & others
- General knowledge
- Ethical development
- Civic responsibility
- Spirituality
Knowledge of self and others

- Understanding self
- Understanding people of other racial and ethnic backgrounds
- Work effectively with others
General knowledge

- Acquiring a broad general education
- Learning effectively on one’s own
Ethical development and problem solving

- Developing a personal code of ethics
- Solving complex real-world problems
Civic responsibility

- Voting in local, state, national elections
- Contributing to the welfare of the community
Spirituality

- Deepened sense of spirituality
Character Development Gains
Seniors

90th %tile
Median
10th %tile

DRU-Ext  DRU-Int  MA  Bac-LA  Bac-Gen
Character Development Gains
Seniors

- DRU-E
- DRU-I
- MA
- Bac-LA
- Bac-Gen

90th % tile
Mean
10th % tile
Seniors: “Gains During College”

- Working Effectively With Others
- Voting in Local, State, or National Elections
- Developing a Personal Code of Ethics & Values

% Responding:
- Very much
- Quite a bit
- Some
- Very little
Seniors: “Gains During College”

- Deepened Sense of Spirituality: Very much (40%), Quite a bit (20%), Some (20%), Very little (20%)
- Contributing, to Welfare of Community: Very much (40%), Quite a bit (20%), Some (20%), Very little (20%)
- Understanding Self: Very much (40%), Quite a bit (20%), Some (20%), Very little (20%)
Seniors: “Never Participated”

% Responding Never

- Community-based Project in Course: 95%
- Volunteered: 20%
- Diverse Perspectives In Class: 100%
- Serious Conversations Other Races: 80%
- Serious Conversations with Different Others: 60%
Seniors: “Never Participated”

- Cultural Events
- Exercise, Physical Fitness
- Understand Another’s Views
- Study Abroad
- Spirituality Activities

% Responding Never

- Cultural Events: 30%
- Exercise, Physical Fitness: 40%
- Understand Another’s Views: 50%
- Study Abroad: 90%
- Spirituality Activities: 40%
The Role of Spirituality

1. Students who frequently engage in spirituality-enhancing practices also participate more in a broad cross-section of collegiate activities (461 IHEs)
The Role of Spirituality

1. Students who frequently engage in spirituality-enhancing practices also participate more in a broad cross-section of collegiate activities.

2. Institutional mission and campus culture matter more to spirituality and liberal learning outcomes than most other institutional characteristics.
The Role of Spirituality

1. Students who frequently engage in spirituality-enhancing practices also participate more in a broad cross-section of collegiate activities.

2. Institutional mission and campus culture matter more to spirituality and liberal learning outcomes than most other institutional characteristics.

3. **Students at faith-based colleges** (n=29) engage in spiritual practices more and gain more in this area, but participate less often in certain other activities associated with liberal education outcomes.
High-Impact Educational Practices

What they are, who has access to them, and why they matter

By George D. Kuh

With an introduction by Carol Geary Schneider

And findings on student success from AAC&U’s LEAP initiative

AACU
Association of American Colleges and Universities

www.aacu.org
Narrow Learning is Not Enough: The Essential Learning Outcomes

★ Knowledge of Human Cultures and the Physical & Natural World
★ Intellectual, Practical & Technical Skills
★ Personal and Social Responsibility
★ “Deep” Integrative Learning
High Impact Activities

★ First-Year Seminars and Experiences
★ Common Intellectual Experiences
★ Learning Communities
★ Writing-Intensive Courses
★ Collaborative Assignments and Projects
★ “Science as Science Is Done”; Undergraduate Research
★ Diversity/Global Learning
★ Service Learning, Community-Based Learning
★ Internships
★ Capstone Courses and Projects
## Effects of Participating in High-Impact Activities on Deep/Integrative Learning and Gains

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Deep Learning</th>
<th>Gains General</th>
<th>Gains Personal</th>
<th>Gains Practical</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>First-Year</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning Communities</td>
<td>+++</td>
<td>++</td>
<td>++</td>
<td>++</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Service Learning</td>
<td>+++</td>
<td>++</td>
<td>+++</td>
<td>++</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Senior</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Study Abroad</td>
<td>++</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>++</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student-Faculty Research</td>
<td>+++</td>
<td>++</td>
<td>++</td>
<td>++</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internship</td>
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<td>++</td>
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<td>++</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Service Learning</td>
<td>+++</td>
<td>++</td>
<td>+++</td>
<td>++</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Culminating Experience</td>
<td>++</td>
<td>++</td>
<td>++</td>
<td>++</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

+ p < .001, ++ p < .001 & Unstd B > .10, +++ p < .001 & Unstd B > .30
# Effects of Participating in High-Impact Activities on Student Engagement

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Level of Academic Challenge</th>
<th>Active and Collab. Learning</th>
<th>Student-Faculty Interaction</th>
<th>Supportive Campus Env.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>First-Year</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td>++</td>
<td>+++</td>
<td>+++</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

* + p < .001, ++ p < .001 & Unstd B > .10, +++ p < .001 & Unstd B > .30
High-Impact Activities
Increase Odds Students Will:

✓ Invest time and effort
✓ Interact with faculty and peers about substantive matters
✓ Experience diversity
✓ Get more frequent feedback
✓ Reflect & integrate learning
✓ Discover relevance of learning through real-world applications
“If all you ever do is all you’ve ever done, then all you’ll ever get is all you ever got”

Texan quoted in T. Friedman, *Hot, Flat and Crowded* (2008, p. 6)
We reap what we sow

*If character development is important...*

Institutions should both expect and require students to do the things that develop character
What Contributes to Character Development?

- Volunteer experiences
- Course-linked participation in community-based projects
- Activities that enhance spirituality (worship, meditation, prayer, etc.)
- Diversity-related experiences
- High-impact activities
If We Could Do Two Things...

1. Have every student do at least one character-inducing activity in the first year and another later. 
   Feature reflection, feedback, integration

2. Insure student experiences are high quality, educationally purposeful.
We measure what we value

1. Character measures not featured in VSA, U-CAN, NSSE or other public accountability templates

2. Character measures not likely to appear on AHELO context strand tools
We value what we measure

Thoughtful decisions are needed as to *what* to measure in the context of institutional mission, values, and desired outcomes.
Sample Data Sources

• Locally-developed measures
• National instruments
  – National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE)
  – Beginning College Survey of Student Engagement (BCSSE)
  – Faculty Survey of Student Engagement (FSSE)
  – Cooperative Institutional Research Program (CIRP)
  – Your First College Year (YFCY)
  – College Student Experiences Questionnaire (CSEQ)
  – Noel Levitz Student Satisfaction Inventory
  – ETS MAPP and Major Field Tests
  – ACT Collegiate Assessment of Academic Proficiency
  – Collegiate Learning Assessment (CLA)
• Institutional data -- GPA, financial aid, transcripts, retention, certification tests, alumni surveys, satisfaction surveys…
• Electronic portfolios
• Rubrics
Valid Assessment of Learning in Undergraduate Education (VALUE) Rubrics

- Inquiry and analysis
- Critical thinking
- Creative thinking
- Written communication
- Oral communication
- Reading
- Quantitative literacy
- Information literacy
- Teamwork
- Problem solving
- **Civic knowledge and engagement**
- **Intercultural knowledge and competence**
- **Ethical reasoning and action**
- Foundations and skills for lifelong learning
- Integrative learning
# Ethical Reasoning VALUE Rubric

*for more information, please contact value@aacu.org*

**Definition**

Ethical Reasoning is reasoning about right and wrong human conduct. It requires students to be able to assess the claims of their own ethical values and the social content of problems, recognize ethical issues in a variety of settings, think about how different ethical perspectives might be applied to ethical dilemmas, and consider the ramifications of alternative actions. Students' ethical self-identity evolves as they practice ethical decision-making skills and learn how to describe and analyze positions on ethical issues.

Evaluators are encouraged to assign a zero to any work sample or collection of work that does not meet benchmark (cell one) level performance.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ethical Self-Awareness</th>
<th>Capstone</th>
<th>Milestones</th>
<th>Benchmark</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Student discusses in detail/analyzes both core beliefs and the origins of the core beliefs and discussion has greater depth and clarity.</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understanding Different Ethical Perspectives/Concepts</td>
<td>Student names the theory or theories, can present the gist of said theory or theories, and accurately explains the details of the theory or theories used.</td>
<td>Student can name the major theory or theories she/he uses, can present the gist of said theory or theories, and attempts to explain the details of the theory or theories used, but has some inaccuracies.</td>
<td>Student can name the major theory she/he uses, and is only able to present the gist of the named theory.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethical Issue Recognition</td>
<td>Student can recognize ethical issues when presented in a complex, multilayered (gray) content AND can recognize cross-relationships among the issues.</td>
<td>Student can recognize ethical issues when issues are presented in a complex, multilayered (gray) content OR can grasp cross-relationships among the issues.</td>
<td>Student can recognize basic and obvious ethical issues and grasp (incompletely) the complexities or interrelationships among the issues.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Application of Ethical Perspectives/Concepts</td>
<td>Student can independently apply ethical perspectives/concepts to an ethical question, accurately, and is able to consider full implications of the application.</td>
<td>Student can independently (to a new example) apply ethical perspectives/concepts to an ethical question, accurately, but does not consider the specific implications of the application.</td>
<td>Student can apply ethical perspectives/concepts to an ethical question, independently (to a new example) and the application is inaccurate.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluation of Different Ethical Perspectives/Concepts</td>
<td>Student states a position and can state the objections to, assumptions and implications of and can reasonably defend against the objections to, assumptions and implications of different ethical perspectives/concepts, and the student's defense is adequate and effective.</td>
<td>Student states a position and can state the objections to, assumptions and implications of, and respond to the objections to, assumptions and implications of different ethical perspectives/concepts, but the student's response is inadequate.</td>
<td>Student states a position but cannot state the objections to, and assumptions and limitations of the different perspectives/concepts.</td>
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*AAC&U VALUE Project*
Ponder This

1. Employers and government officials say they want college graduates with character

2. National data collection and accountability efforts do not feature measure of character

3. Institutions and foundations must take the lead in championing character development
Ponder This

1. What are the character-inducing programs/practices (CIPs) available at your school and which students do them?

2. Do students know about the available CIPs? How do they learn about them?

3. How do you know if the CIPs are effective? What is the evidence?
Questions & Discussion