

## Incorporating Competencies

Student Leadership Competencies (SLCs)\* were developed from five years of research conducted by Dr. Corey Seemiller who analyzed learning outcomes in all 522 accredited academic programs in higher education. The results: 60 essential leadership competencies for the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

**Competencies** are knowledge, values, abilities, and behaviors that help an individual contribute to or successfully engage in a role or task.

- **Knowledge:** knowledge of or understanding of the value of a competency
- **Values:** value placed on a competency
- **Ability:** internal motivation to engage in a certain behavior or the skill level to perform a certain behavior
- **Behavior:** engagement in a certain behavior

The University of Iowa has selected 11 key competencies that we expect students to gain as a result of their comprehensive experience at UI. A single experience does not have to provide development around all 11 competencies, only the ones that align with what students gain as a result of participating. You may also choose to focus on other competencies not included in the list below.

1. Analysis
2. Collaboration
3. Ethics
4. Goals
5. Group Development
6. Other Perspectives
7. Problem Solving
8. Productive Relationships
9. Self-Development
10. Verbal Communication
11. Writing

### Guidelines for Effective Practice

Competencies can be used as a framework to develop a program or course, infuse meaningful competency-based activities into the curriculum, assess competency learning and development, and help students reflect and apply their learning in future academic, professional, and life contexts.

Integrating competencies into our work is not about creating new programs or services, it is about using a unifying framework to align what we know is already happening across the University of Iowa. The following guidelines provide suggested practices to increase effectiveness in utilizing competencies within experiences.

**Map it:** Faculty and staff across campus are helping students learn skills that will help them be successful both now and in the future. Utilizing a shared language helps students understand and connect what they are learning across contexts. Mapping your experiences will help you clearly articulate to students what skills they are learning as a result and expose opportunities within the experience to support integrative learning and effective reflection. If you plan to incorporate the competencies into your class, workshop, training, or program, the flowchart on the next page may be a useful guide.

**Name it:** Our research has shown that “cueing” students to pay attention to potential learning opportunities is extremely important. Students are no different than the rest of us – we all go on “auto pilot” sometimes and move through experiences without full awareness. Introduce the terms and everyday definitions of competencies early in your program. You might say something like this, either in the written program materials or in person (or both): “We expect that this program will give you the opportunity to really learn the skills that will help you be successful both now and in the future. As a part of this experience you will gain understanding around analysis, problem solving, and writing. Individuals are confronted with decisions every day that can have a large impact on many facets of their life, financially, socially, interpersonally, etc. With this reality comes the need for analysis, to understand a situation in its entirety to make meaning of the situation and make the best decision possible...”

**Focus on integrative learning:** Integrative learning is about making connections across contexts. Students are able to do this with support, such as portfolios, capstone experiences, or cues to reflect on learning. The ability to connect knowledge and skills from multiple experiences and across different settings is crucial in our increasingly global culture. Essentially, this is about becoming a “good thinker” – someone who can look at new situations and problem solve through them using prior knowledge and experiences. In our situation, we want students to integrate what they are learning in class, on the job, and through our programs and services.



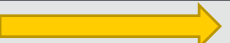
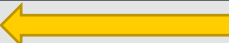




**Effective reflection is critical:** Reflection is the process of thinking about oneself as a learner, considering what one has learned and how particular experiences (such as your program) contribute to learning. Reflection is a metacognitive skill and needs to be developed with practice. It is more likely to happen when we give students some structure, such as a prompt or question to think or write about. Providing a meaningful program or experience is important, but giving students support in meaning-making about that experience is what takes it to a higher impact level. Consider how you can add reflection to an experience at the time (a brief discussion, debrief, or a one-minute paper) or after the fact (an openended question on a program evaluation for instance) in order to increase the likelihood that students will, in fact, reflect on the experience. Potential reflection questions are outlined below.

- What skills do you think you will develop as a result of participating in this experience?
- Write about a skill that you have developed as a result of this experience.
- What does it look like to effectively utilize [competency]?
- When have you used [competency] inside and outside the classroom?
- What have you learned here [in this experience] about [competency] that you think might be helpful in your [academic courses, co-curricular involvement, job, future career]?
- How might you continue to develop [competency] in the future?
- What challenges have you experienced developing [competency]?
- How would you describe your skills in [competency] on your resume or during a job interview?

## Take Home Points:

- **Competencies:** Knowledge, values, abilities, and behaviors that help and individual contribute to or successfully engage in a role or task.
- **Use the terms:** Introduce the terms explicitly in program descriptions and introductions
- **Remind students to pay attention:** Cue students to watch for learning opportunities and reflect
- **Structure reflection:** Incorporate reflection into experiences, or at the least, into post-event evaluations

**Incorporating Competencies:** If you plan to incorporate competencies into your class, workshop, training, or program, the following flowchart may be helpful to guide you. If you have an existing class, workshop, training, or program you are working from, follow the steps in the far right column. If you are developing a new class, workshop, training, or program, follow the steps in the far left column as you plan.

I Am Developing a New Program				I Have an Existing Program
Consider your program and/or institutional values, goals, outcomes, and needs in determining appropriate competencies.		Refer to the <b>Student Leadership Competencies Guidebook</b> for a description of each competency and select applicable competencies.		Match existing learning outcomes with competencies.
Will this program be based on a leadership model? If yes:		Add appropriate competencies from the <b>Jossey-Bass Student Leadership Competencies Database</b> .		Is this program based on a leadership model? If yes:
Will this program be targeting toward students in a specific academic program? If yes:		Add appropriate competencies from the <b>Jossey-Bass Student Leadership Competencies Database</b> .		Ensure the existing curriculum is appropriate to develop the intended competencies, and develop curriculum for any newly added competencies. Do you need ideas for curriculum? If yes:
Develop a curriculum based on selected competencies. Do you need ideas for curriculum? If yes:		Refer to the <b>Student Leadership Competencies Guidebook</b> for curricular ideas for each competency.		Create evaluations of competencies you intend to measure.