Why a liberal arts core curriculum?
The employer’s perspective

A forum for students, faculty, staff and the public
November 20, 2014
How about if I just take courses in my major?
What is most important for recent college graduates seeking career advancement and long-term career success?
• Results of a 2013 AACU survey of executives at profit and non-profit employers with 25 or more employees (n=318)

• https://www.aacu.org/leap/2013-survey/presentation
What kinds of skills?
Employers want colleges to place more emphasis on...

- Critical thinking/analytical reasoning
- Ability to analyze/solve complex problems
- Effective oral communication
- Effective written communication
- Apply knowledge/skills to real world settings
- Locate, organize, evaluate info from multiple sources
- Innovation/creativity
- Teamwork/collaboration in diverse group settings
- Ability to connect choices and actions to ethical decisions

More emphasis | Same emphasis | Less emphasis
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Why these skills? Accounting, conducting a background check, typesetting a text, measuring a chemical, building a motor...those are *useful* skills!

• Yes, they are...in particular times and places
BUT the economy and the world are changing, and you will have to change with it...

- Some jobs won’t even *exist* in 20 years and new jobs will get created

- Need to develop skills that can be applied across domains
  - Ask boundary spanning questions (see the big picture, transfer)
  - Solve big problems (technical knowledge + see possibilities + team building)
  - Communicate with people outside your field (speak and write persuasively, no matter who your audience is)

- Figure out how the skills in accounting, conducting a background check, typesetting a text, measuring a chemical, building a motor can be *transferred* to novel settings
Knowledge and skills

In general education courses, you gain knowledge and develop skills.
Skills

• You develop skills by *doing*
  – You can learn a lot by listening, watching, observing...
  – But you have to *practice, engage, make mistakes, solve problems (anticipated and unanticipated), ask questions, seek answers, parse information, organize data and ideas, communicate, teach* in order to develop the **skills** employers seek

• You are not like an empty vessel to be filled.
• You are like a muscle to be toned.
Skills

At WOU, what do we do in general education that develops skills at:

- Connecting choices and actions to ethical decisions
- Teamwork/collaboration in diverse group settings
- Innovation/creativity
- Locating, organizing, evaluating info from multiple sources
- Applying knowledge/skills to real world settings
- Effective written communication
- Effective oral communication
- Analyzing/solving complex problems
- Critical thinking/analytical reasoning

What could we do? Which of the above might be most important? What should we focus on?