

# Communicating Effectively—and Delivering on the Promise of— General and Liberal Education:

*Millersville University*

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*“Now you’re probably all asking yourselves,  
‘Why must I learn to read and write?’ ”*

# Liberal Education & America's Promise



EXCELLENCE FOR EVERYONE AS A NATION GOES TO COLLEGE

**“A COLLABORATION BETWEEN EDUCATORS, STUDENTS,  
POLICYMAKERS, AND BUSINESS AND COMMUNITY LEADERS”**



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# *Why Make Communications a Priority*

- Intentionality and coherence of educational experience
- Lack of awareness about what really matters in college—especially among first-generation students and their families
- General education outcomes more important than ever, but less well-understood than ever
- Slipping public confidence in higher education



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# *Slipping Public Confidence and Definitions of “the problem that needs solving”*

- In 2009, 60% agreed that “colleges today are like most businesses and care more about the bottom line than about making sure students have a **good educational experience**. (up from 52% in 2007). (Public Agenda)

# *The Communications Challenges*

*External challenge (public, prospective students, parents)*

- What is a “good educational experience”?
- What are the **essential elements** of a good education?
- Why is general education essential to having a “good educational experience”?

*Internal challenge (current students, faculty, colleagues)*

- How does general education fit into the larger goals of institution?
- How are we collectively providing an integrative quality education?
- How does general education connect with the major?
- How is quality general education related to increasing student success?



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*Essential To Communicate Well:  
Know Your Environment; Be Clear with One's  
Language*

**Three Questions:**

- *What are the competing narratives/messages?*
- *What is a better narrative/set of messages that work for different audiences?*
- *How are other institutions responding—practice and communications?*

# *Frequently Confused Terms*

**Liberal Education**

**Liberal Arts**

**Liberal Arts and Sciences**

**Liberal Arts College**

**General Education**



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# *Competing Messages*

- National and local media stories: “college isn’t worth the money;” “liberal arts not good preparation for success in getting a job;” “technical skills/majors matter most”
- Internal mixed messages from advisors, other faculty, etc.: “get your gen ed requirements out of the way;” “what’s really important is our discipline, our standards for evidence;” “gen ed courses don’t prepare students to succeed in our discipline.”

## *Our Message: The Big Picture*

**“The world in which today’s students will make choices and compose lives is one of disruption rather than certainty, and of interdependence rather than insularity.”**

*College Learning for the New Global Century*  
(AAC&U 2007)



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*Is it General Education or  
the Major that Really  
Matters?*

*It's Both—and More*



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# *Narrow Learning is Not Enough*

## *The LEAP Essential Learning Outcomes*

- *Knowledge of Human Cultures and the Physical and Natural World*  
**Focused** on engagement with big questions, enduring and contemporary
- *Intellectual and Practical Skills*  
**Practiced** extensively across the curriculum, in the context of progressively more challenging problems, projects, and standards for performance
- *Personal and Social Responsibility*  
**Anchored** through active involvement with diverse communities and real-world challenges
- *Integrative and Applied Learning*  
**Demonstrated** through the application of knowledge, skills, and responsibilities to new settings and complex problems



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# *Millersville Goals*

“cultivate the intellect by educating students to reason logically, to think critically, to express themselves clearly, and to foster an understanding of the human condition.”

- Lifelong learning
- Critical thinking across the liberal arts
- Connections and exploration



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# *Both/And—not Either/Or*

**The outcomes important for professional success in today's global economy are the same as the outcomes needed for responsible citizenship in a diverse and globally engaged democracy.**

*“workforce development and civic engagement ‘need not be separate or competing missions’ but ‘can be complementary visions’.”*

A Crucible Moment 2012



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## *It Takes More Than a Major*

**“Beware. Your degree is not a proxy for your ability to do any job. The world only cares about — and pays off on — what you can do with what you know (and it doesn’t care how you learned it). And in an age when innovation is increasingly a group endeavor, it also cares about a lot of soft skills — leadership, humility, collaboration, adaptability and loving to learn and re-learn. This will be true no matter where you go to work.”**

*Lazslo Bock, senior VP of people operations,  
Google (quoted in NY Times 2/23, 2014)*



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# National Surveys of Employers on College Learning and Graduates' Work Readiness

*AAC&U commissioned Hart Research Associates (in 2006, 2007, 2009, and 2013) to interview employers (C-level suite executives and, in 2009 additional human resource professionals) whose companies report that hiring relatively large numbers of college graduates*

*How Should Colleges Prepare Students to Succeed in Today's Global Economy?*  
(AAC&U, 2007)

*How Should Colleges Assess and Improve Student Learning? Employers' Views on the Accountability Challenge* (AAC&U, 2008)

*Raising the Bar: Employers' Views on College Learning in the Wake of the Economic Downturn* (AAC&U, 2010)

*It Takes More Than a Major: Employer Priorities for College Learning and Student Success* (AAC&U, 2013)

See: [www.aacu.org/leap/public\\_opinion\\_research](http://www.aacu.org/leap/public_opinion_research)



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# It Takes More Than A Major:

## *Employer Priorities for College Learning and Student Success*

Key findings from survey among 318 employers

Conducted January 9 – 13, 2013

*for*



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# Employers Prioritize Innovation and Transferable Skills

■ Strongly agree with this statement about employees/future hires    ■ Somewhat agree

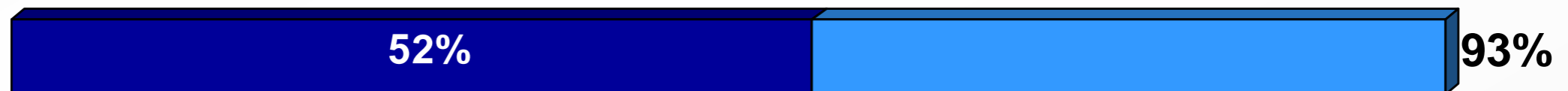
**Our company puts a priority on hiring people with the intellectual and inter-personal skills that will help them contribute to innovation in the workplace**



**Candidates' demonstrated capacity to think critically, communicate clearly, & solve complex problems is more important than their undergraduate major**



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



**Innovation is essential to our company/organization's continued success**



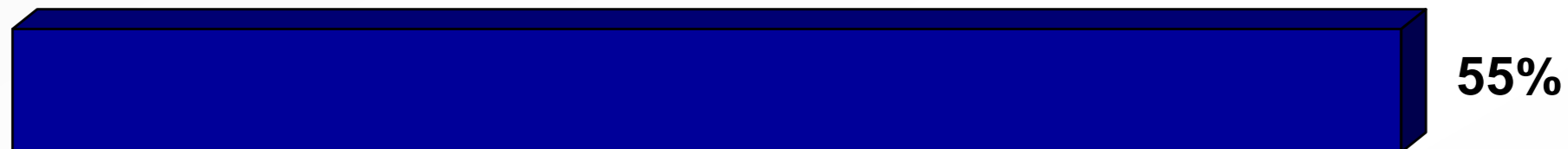
**The challenges employees face within our company are more complex today than they were in the past**



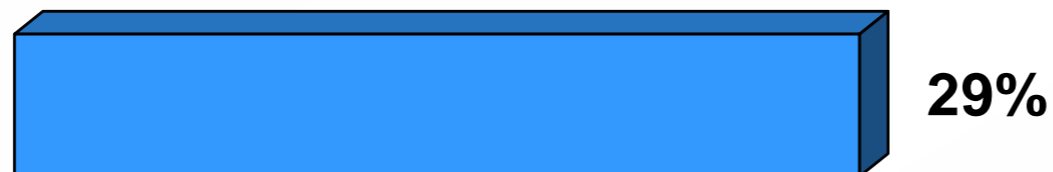
**Quality = A Both/And Vision**  
*Long-term career success requires  
broad knowledge and specific skills*

*Which is more important for recent college graduates who want to pursue advancement and long-term career success at your company?*

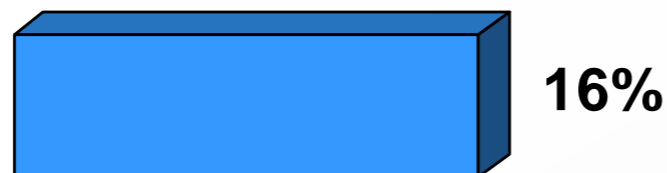
Having both field-specific knowledge and skills AND a broad range of skills and knowledge



Having a range of skills and knowledge that apply to a range of fields or positions



Having knowledge and skills that apply to a specific field or position



# Employers value cross-cutting skills and support liberal arts, diversity, and civic learning

■ Very important that our employees have this quality/skill    ■ Fairly important

## Ethical judgment and integrity



## Comfortable working with colleagues, customers, and/or clients from diverse cultural backgrounds



## Demonstrated capacity for professional development and continued new learning



## Interest in giving back to the communities in which our company is located or those that it serves



## Knowledge of global cultures, histories, values, religions, and social systems



# *Millersville Mission*

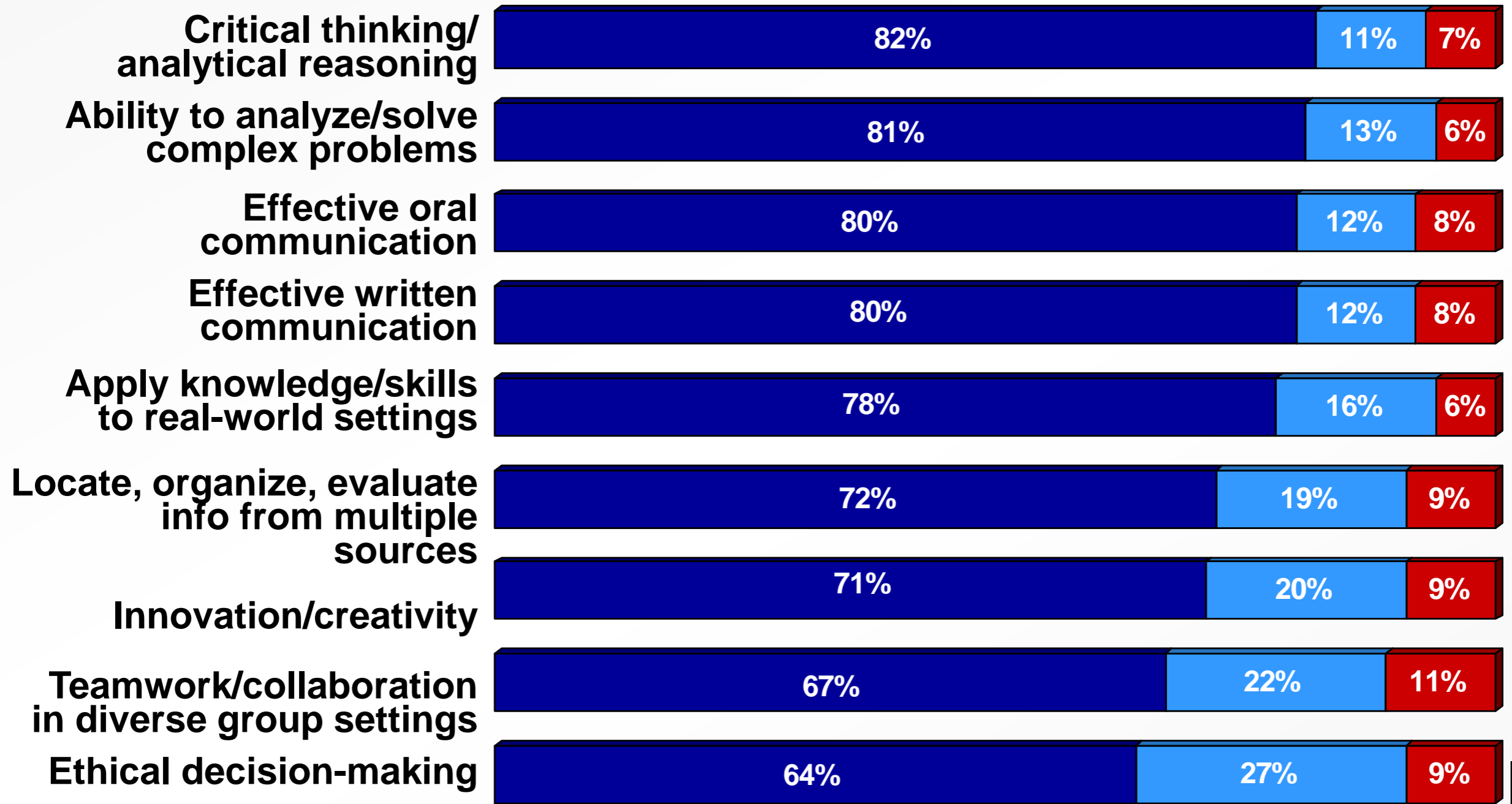
**“Through interdisciplinary learning, collaborative and cross-cultural experiences and a renewed focus on a liberal arts tradition, our students become well-prepared for meaningful participation in the broader society.”**



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# Majorities of employers want colleges to place more emphasis on broad, cross-cutting skills and application.

■ More emphasis than they do today   
 ■ The same emphasis   
 ■ Less emphasis



# AAC&U Members On Trends In Learning Outcomes, General Education, and Assessment

Key findings from online survey among 433 Chief Academic Officers and other academic leaders at AAC&U member institutions

Conducted November 19, 2008 – February 16, 2009

*for*

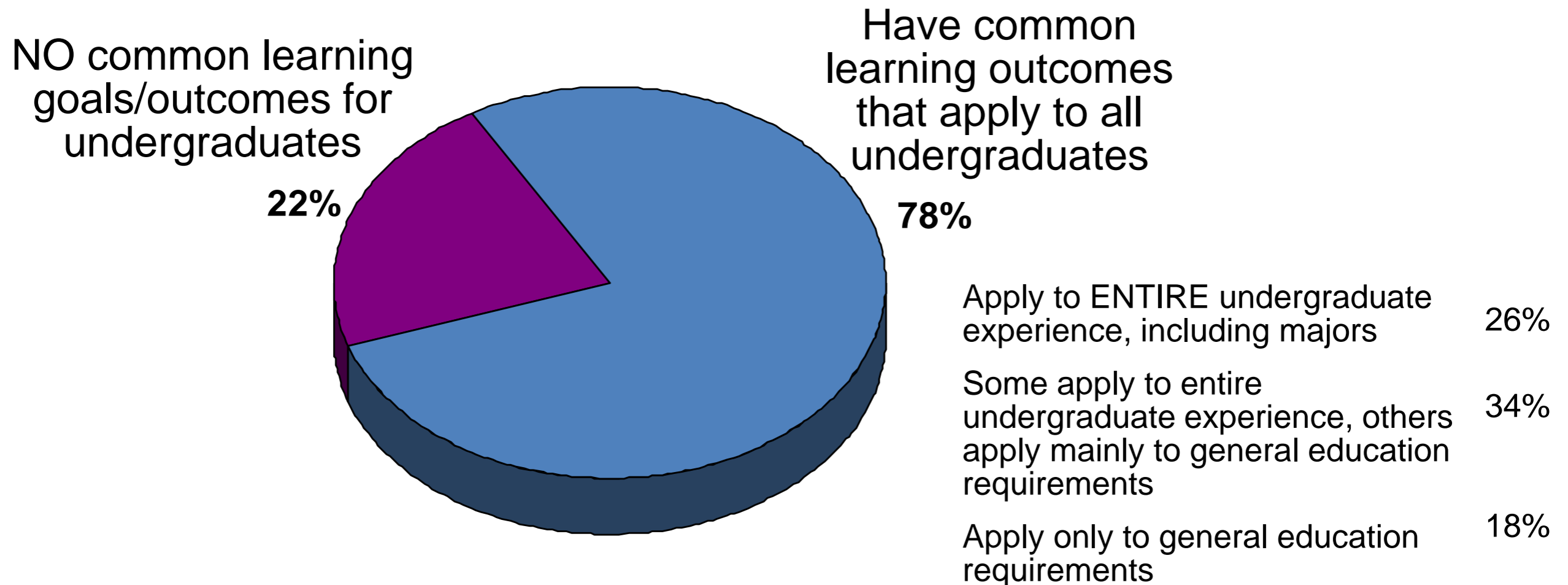


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Margin of sampling error  
 $\pm 4.7$  percentage points

# *Nearly four in five institutions have a set of common learning outcomes for all undergraduates.*

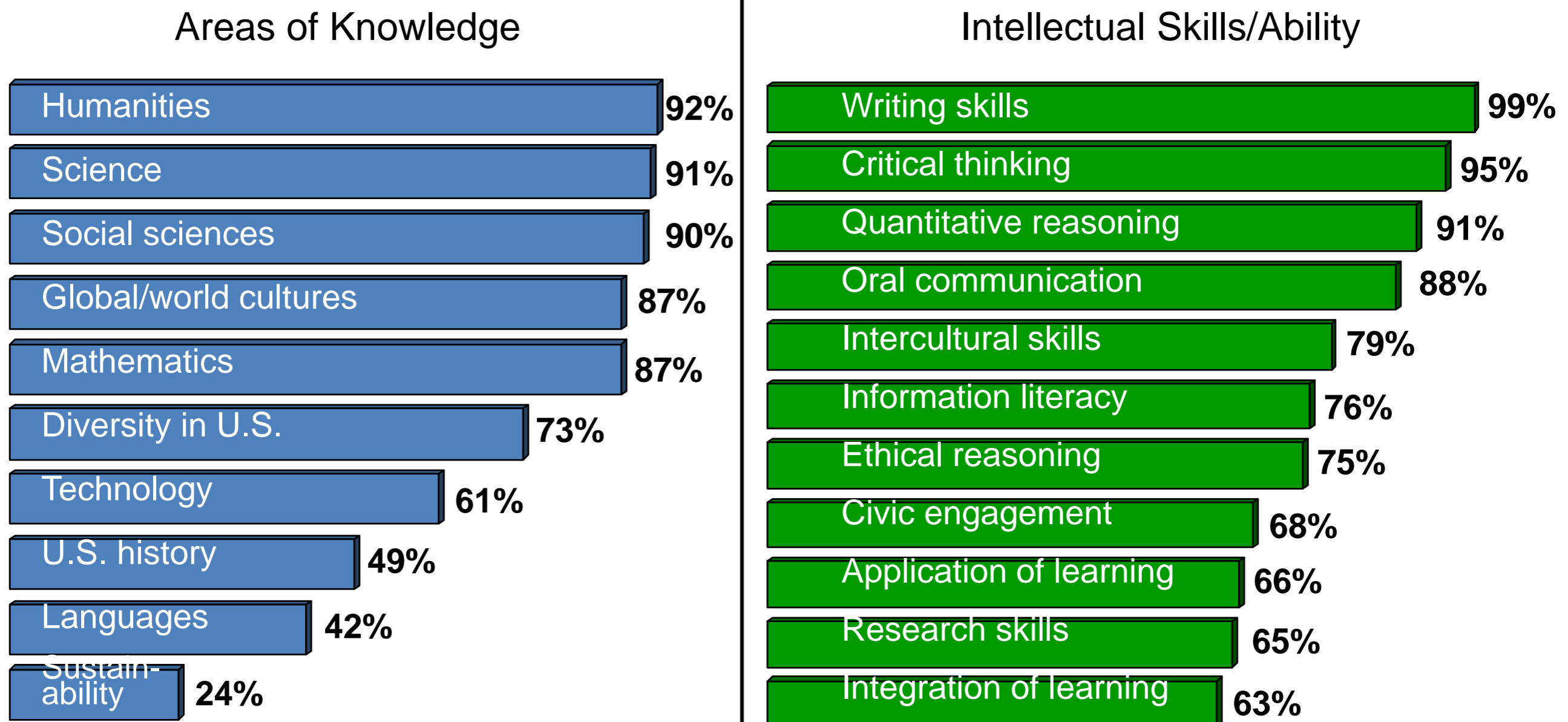
*Does your institution have a common set of intended learning goals or outcomes that apply to ALL undergrad-uate students?*





# Goals/Outcomes for All Students' College Learning

Among respondents from campuses WITH campus-wide goals, percent saying their institution's common set of learning goals/outcomes addresses each area of knowledge/intellectual skills & ability



# *General Education Requirements*

## **General education credits needed for bachelor's degree**

\*

More than 60 credits	6%
51 to 60 credits	18%
46 to 50 credits	10%
41 to 45 credits	19%
36 to 40 credits	14%
31 to 35 credits	4%
1 to 30 credits	9%
<i>Don't know</i>	20%

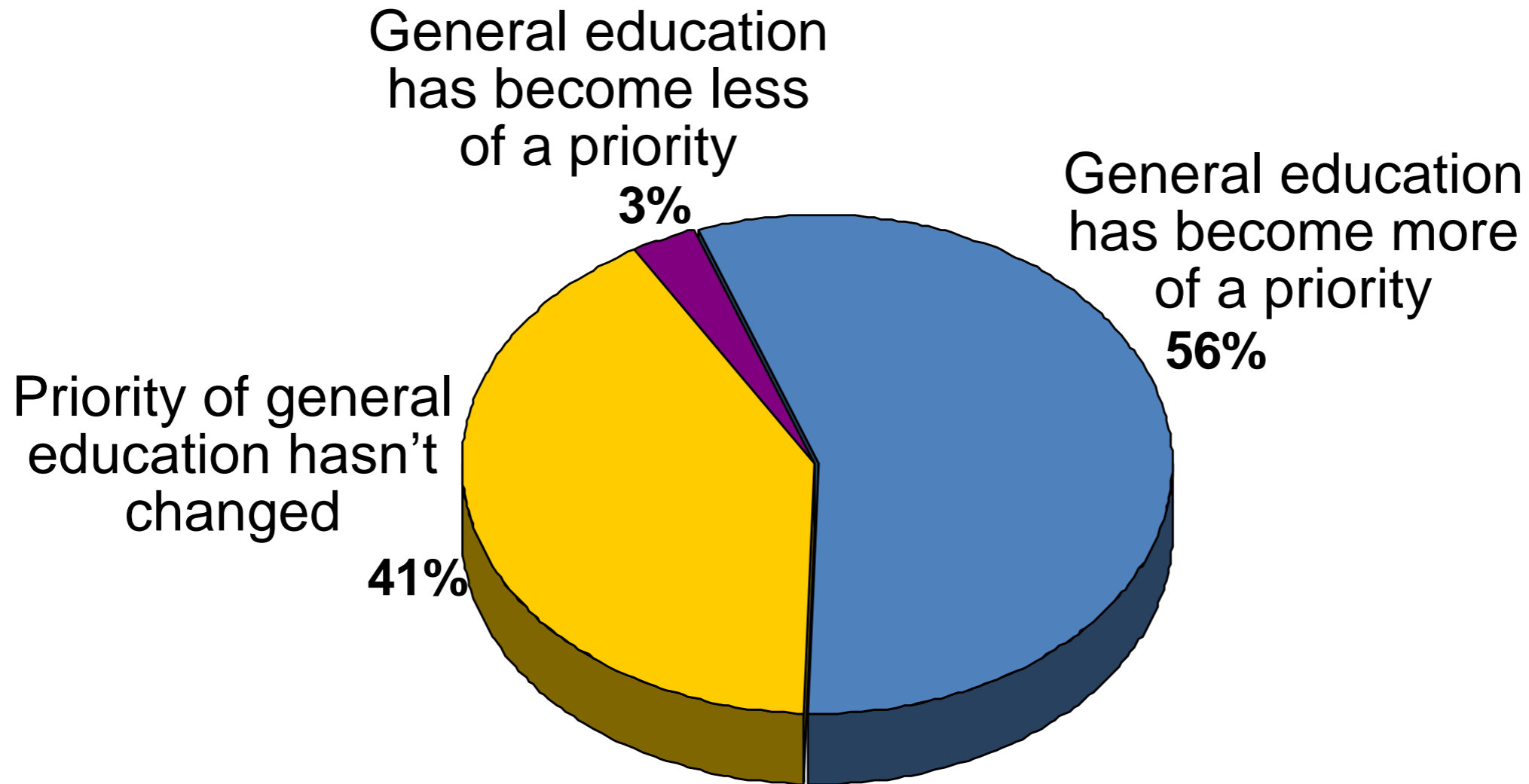
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Mean 46.6

14% say their institution's general education credit requirements have increased since 2000, 14% say they have decreased, 72% say they have stayed the same.

# *Majority of institutions say general education is more of a priority.*

*How has general education changed as a priority for your institution in the past five years?*



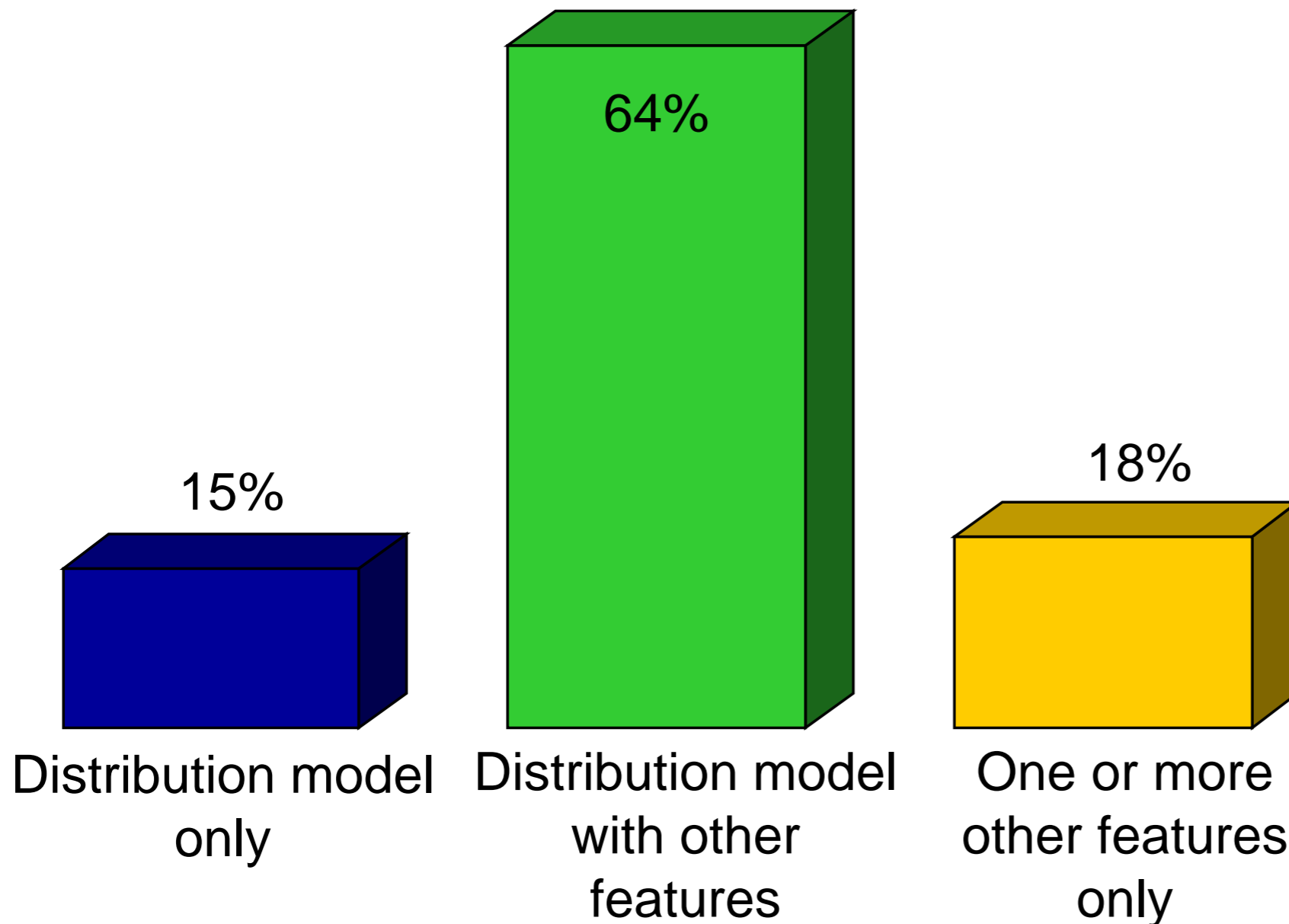
# *Institutions use a variety of models for their general education programs.*

*Which of these features are part of your institution's general education program?*

Distribution model	<b>80%</b>
Common intellectual experience	<b>41%</b>
Thematic required courses	<b>36%</b>
Upper-level requirements	<b>33%</b>
Core curriculum	<b>30%</b>
Learning communities	<b>24%</b>
No general education requirements; offer open curriculum	<b>1%</b>
Freshmen part of learning communities; transfer students are not	<b>2%</b>

# The majority of institutions uses a distribution model with additional integrative features.

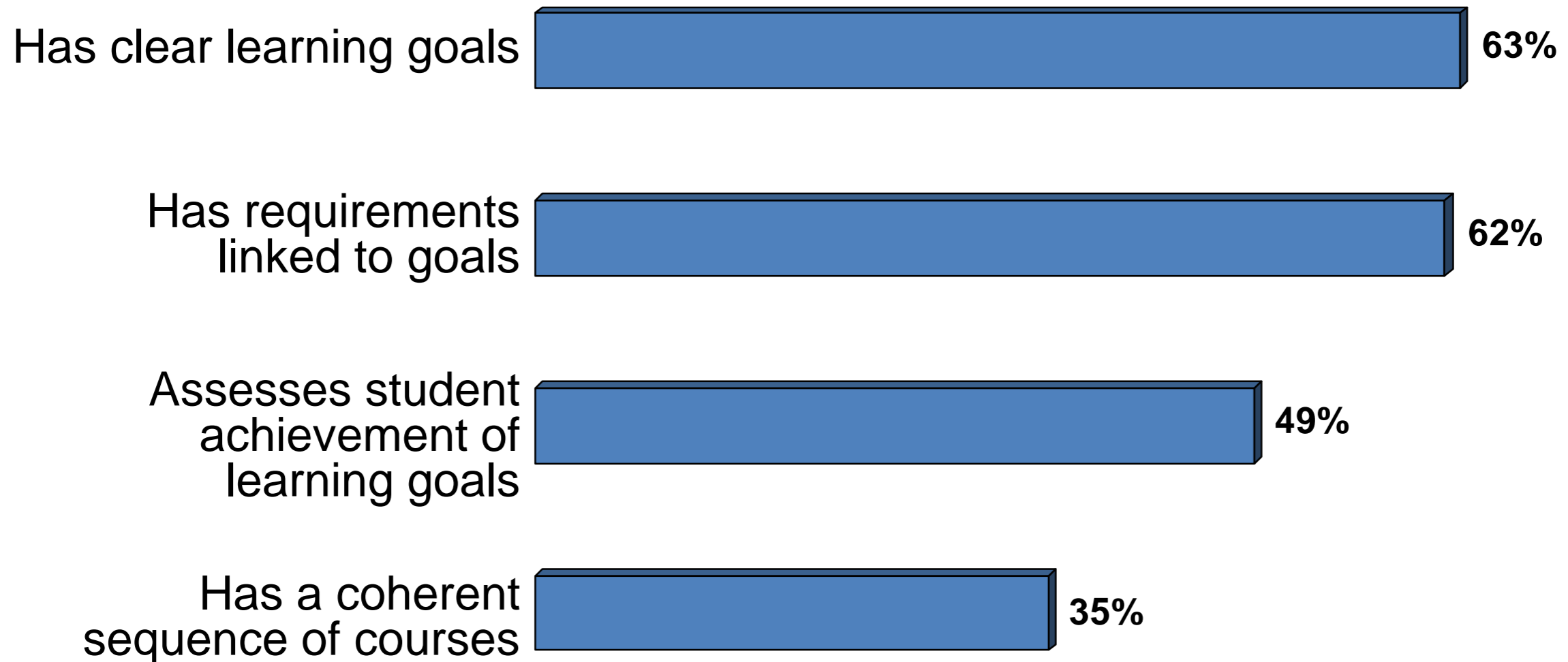
*Which of these features are part of your institution's general education program?*



- Other features:**
- Common intellectual experience
  - Thematic required courses
  - Upper-level requirements
  - Core curriculum
  - Learning communities

# *Characteristics Of General Education Programs*

*% rating each as describing their general education program well\**



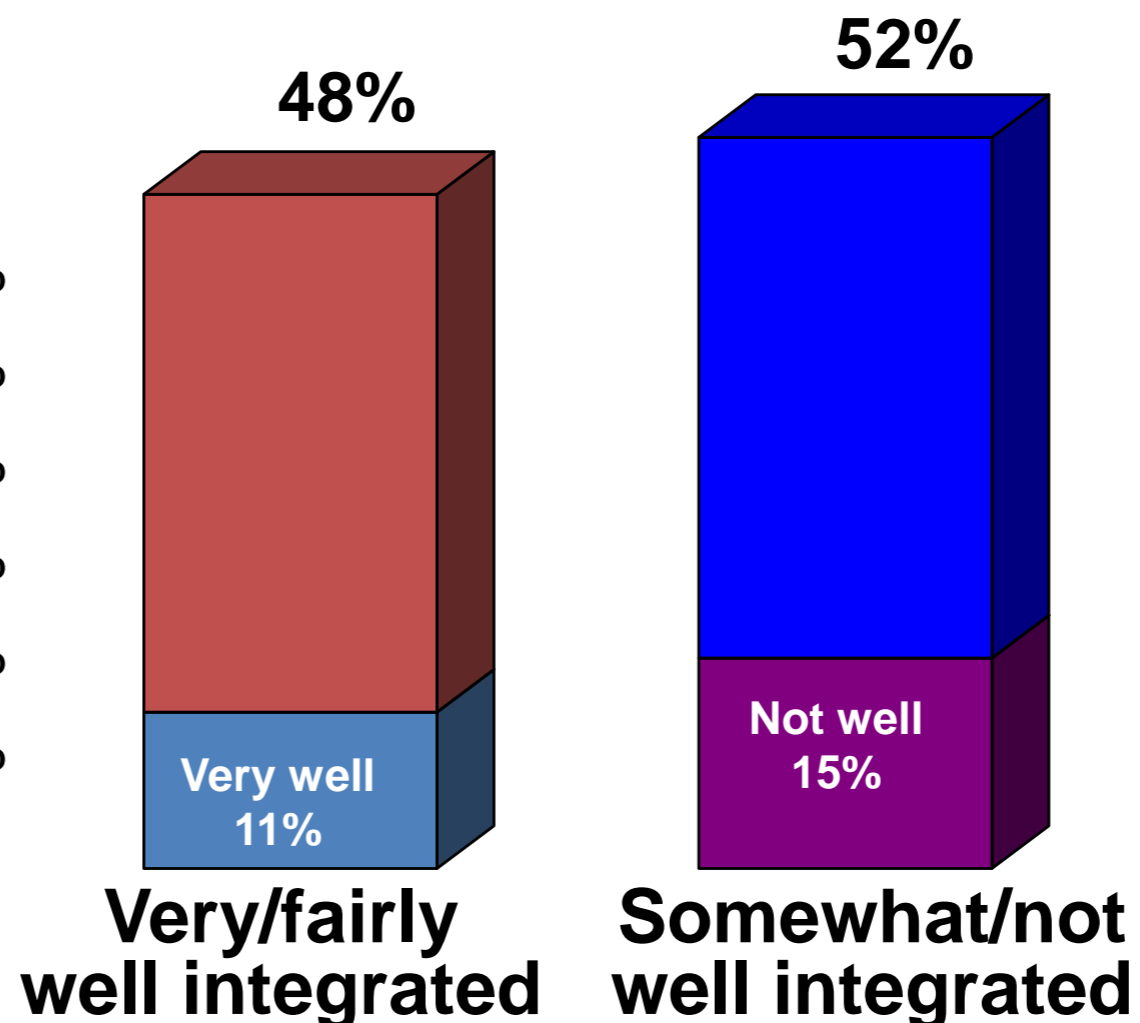
\* ratings of 4 and 5 on a five-point scale

# *Integration Of General Education And Major Requirements.*

*How well integrated is your general education program with students' major requirements?*

**% very/fairly well integrated, by  
general ed program features**

Distribution model	45%
Common intellectual model	53%
Thematic required courses	54%
Upper-level requirements	55%
Core curriculum	60%
Learning communities	55%



# *High Impact Educational Practices*

- ★ First-Year Seminars and Experiences
- ★ Common Intellectual Experiences
- ★ Learning Communities
- ★ Writing-Intensive Courses
- ★ Collaborative Assignments and Projects
- ★ Undergraduate Research
- ★ Diversity/Global Learning
- ★ Service Learning, Community-Based Learning
- ★ Internships
- ★ Capstone Courses and Projects



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# ***Research Reports on High-Impact Practices***

## ***High-Impact Educational Practices:***

***What They Are, Who Has Access to them, and Why They Matter***

**by George D. Kuh (2008)**

## ***Five High-Impact Practices:***

***Research on Learning Outcomes, Completion, and Quality***

**by Lynn Swaner and Jayne Brownell (2010)**

***Ensuring Quality and Taking High-Impact Practices to Scale***

**by George D. Kuh and Ken O'Donnell (2013)**

***Investing in Success: Cost-Effective Strategies to Increase Student Success***

**By Jane Wellman and Rima Brusi (2013)**

***Assessing Underserved Students' Engagement in High-Impact Practices***

**by Ashley Finley and Tia McNair (2013)**

# What The Evidence Shows About HIPs

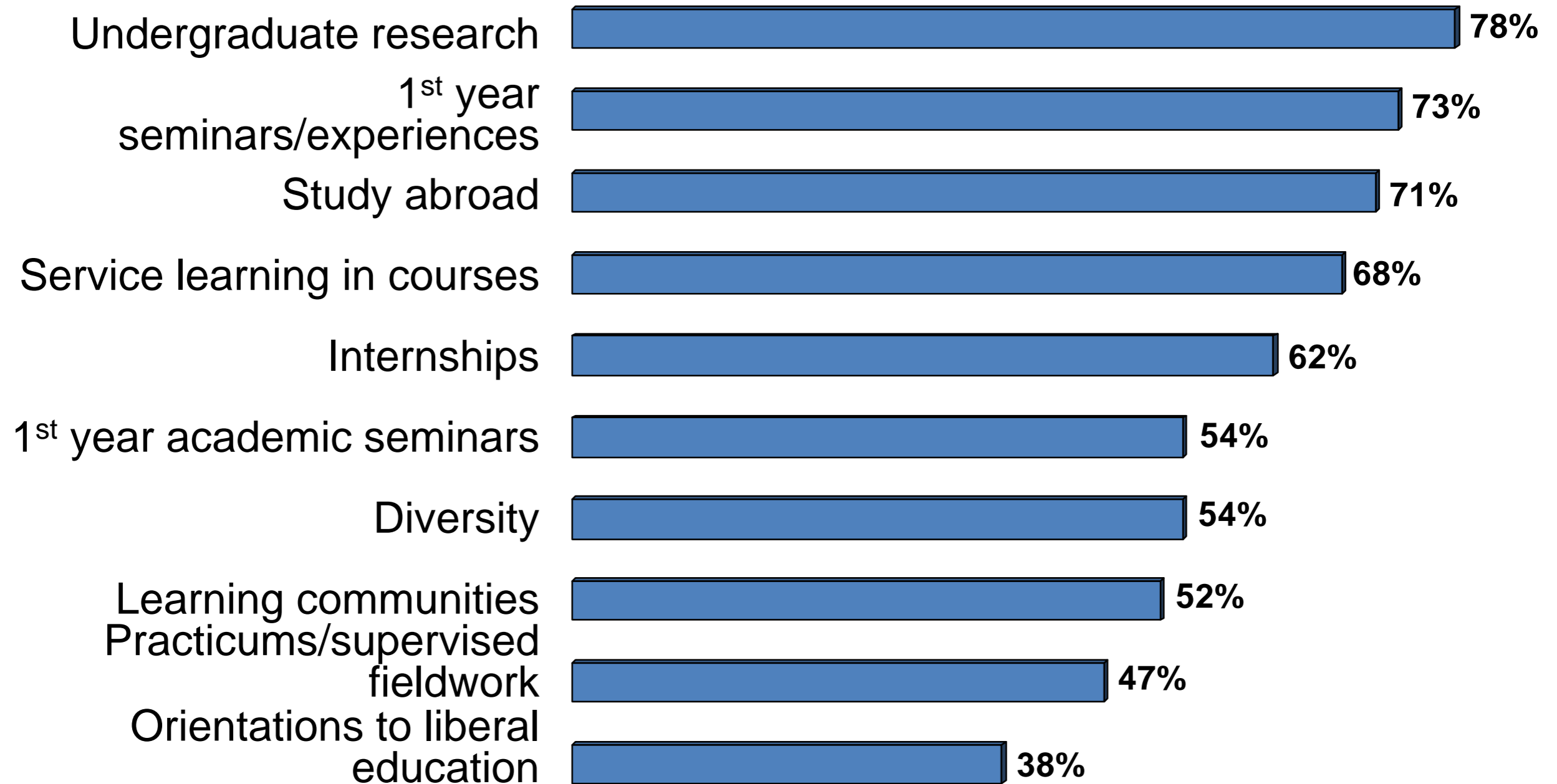
- Increase engagement, time on task, and integrative elements
- Correlated with levels of academic challenge, active and collaborative learning, student-faculty interaction
- Correlated with higher GPA, higher retention rates, greater satisfaction rates
- Student learning outcomes—increased critical thinking, communications, and ethical reasoning
- Impact for all students; greater impact for less well-prepared students and students of color.



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# *Areas Of Emphasis In Undergraduate Curriculum*

*% saying their institution is placing more emphasis on each*





## *Competing Narrative with False Dichotomy: The Aims of College Are...*

...provide a broad, well-rounded education that enables discovery of interests and abilities to help students realize their full potential in life

“I’m thinking that if I realize my full potential, and discover that here, and have a broad range of appreciating who people are and cultures outside my own, then I will be okay. [The] second will come from the first.”

*Student, California State University System*

...provide students with specific career knowledge and skills to help them realize their full potential in the workforce

“I worry that if I go through this great diverse education, but I can’t go out and find a decent paying wage at the end of it, then, while I may be a better person for it, I’m still basically [out of luck].”

*Student, Oregon University System*



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# *Outcomes of College: Student Views*

- **The outcomes of college that HS and college students think are most important:**

**maturity, time management, work habits, self-discipline, teamwork.**

- **The outcomes students think are least important:**

**values, cultural diversity, science, American history and culture, computer skills, global awareness, civic engagement.**

- **Students don't connect outcomes to the curriculum.**
- **Long-term professional success overwhelmingly primary reason to go to college**



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# *Main Messages That Work*

- **There is an emerging consensus about the essential learning outcomes students need for success—and an engaged liberal education provides these outcomes.**
- **Narrow Learning Is Not Enough and general education is an essential part of providing students the outcomes they need.**
- **Students must gain broad knowledge and have the opportunity to hone skills over time and in real-worlds settings.**
- **We need to create more integrated and engaged educational experiences to ensure that students are prepared for 21<sup>st</sup> century challenges.**



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# *Help students understand the true power of education*

**“In a world of relentless change, all students need the kind of education that leads them to ask not just ‘how do we get this done?’ but also ‘what is most worth doing?’”**

*College Learning for the New Global Century, 2007*



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