Executive Summary

The strongest conviction of the LET is that CU Denver can raise the level of undergraduate learning, enhance students’ sense of belonging, improve retention and completion, and heighten the academic quality and the identity of our university by working collectively on reforms to increase integrative learning. Integrative learning prepares graduates to be innovative and analytical thinkers but also self-reflective, civic-minded, and ethical thinkers who synthesize knowledge from multiple disciplines and experiences to address unscripted real-world problems. Integrative learning works toward increased curricular coherence, is inherently interdisciplinary, and is application-oriented. Integrative learning is what students experience when faculty and staff more intentionally design the connections in curricular and co-curricular elements and are more explicit about that design and the learning goals upon which it is based. This report provides the support for these conclusions and for the recommendations drawn from them. Below is a selective summary of those recommendations; the four roman numerals are in priority order, as are the top two more specific recommendations underneath each of those.

Recommendation I: Strengthen the campus culture around teaching and learning.
   A. Value faculty development in teaching more highly, first by fully funding the Center for Faculty Development.
   B. Value teaching equally in faculty review, incentives, and rewards. (See below for the additional recommendations I.C.-F. and for fuller description of each recommendation.)

Recommendation II: Reaffirm campus-wide commitment to the teaching and learning of essential skills and dispositions for all undergraduates in all majors.
   A. Adopt/adapt the ELOs as the campus’s common learning outcomes.
   B. Reconceptualize and reform the CU Denver Core. (See below for II.C.)

Recommendation III: Integrate curricula across the entire undergraduate experience.
   A. Integrate the general-education Core into the majors.
   B. Integrate the disciplines further into the general-education Core. (See below for III.C.-E.)

Recommendation IV: Increase student engagement and learning by increasing the availability of High-Impact Practices (listed in Appendix R).
   A. Increase service learning, community-based learning, and internships.
   B. Create and expand a learning communities (LC) program. (See below for IV.C.-I.)

I. Introduction, Background, Process

The Learning Enhancement Taskforce (LET) was launched in January 2011, and the members, listed in Appendix A, chose to continue work beyond the initial completion date for an additional semester through May 2014. The charge from then Dean Dan Howard was to investigate any and all reforms that would improve the learning of CU Denver undergraduate students. Within the first six months of research and consultation, the members came to several general conclusions:

1. **It is (past) time to evolve.** Liberal arts and sciences education—the foundation of CU Denver’s undergraduate education for all majors—and the traditional structure of the university—in
which majors, general education, co-curriculum, and experiential learning are siloed and
teaching is still too teacher-centric rather than student-centric—have not changed at the rate of
society, students, or the job market.

2. **The teaching-learning mission is a crucial priority.** Given the current realities facing higher
education and the downtown campus, student learning and student success (completion, jobs)
need to be considered our two primary educational “products.” The ongoing success of this
campus depends on our ability to provide a high-quality educational experience. *Academic
quality*, in teaching especially but also in student services, is the primary determinant of student
learning and satisfaction, which in turn are the primary determinants of student success and
attracting and retaining students. Thus, building and sustaining academic quality should figure
more prominently in faculty and staff hiring, incentives, and rewards, on the one hand, and in
institutional branding and marketing, on the other hand. In today’s global marketplace,
successful schools will be the ones that provide outstanding learning experiences for students.

3. **We can do better.** National studies suggest that a larger than desirable percentage of university
students are graduating without expected levels of competency in essential skills, such as
writing and quantitative literacy, and in essential dispositions, such as understanding civic,
ethical, and diversity-related responsibilities. Furthermore, many students are not graduating in
the desired time-frames or are not being adequately supported to ensure their retention.

4. **It is those essential skills and dispositions that students need most.** The instant availability of
“content” via the internet means that universities need to focus (even more than they always
have) on delivering the *skills* to analyze, evaluate, apply, adapt, synthesize, and communicate
that content. The rate of change in the job market calls for these same non-discipline-specific
transferable capabilities. This is what a liberal-arts-and-sciences-based education delivers. This
does not demote the importance of the major, though it does elevate the importance of general
education. It also points to the need to integrate the learning of those essential skills and
dispositions across majors, general education, co-curriculum, and experiential learning.

5. **Shared learning outcomes and learning outcomes assessment therefore are key.** In order to
improve the learning of essential skills and disposition by all undergraduates, all academic units
and student-service units should *share* highest-order learning outcomes. Assessment of student
learning of those outcomes is crucial, first as feedback to us for ongoing improvement and
second to demonstrate to students, parents, citizens, and legislators the academic quality and
value of the education we offer.

6. **These and related concerns are part of a national revolution in higher education.** Hundreds of
other universities are facing the same challenges and asking the same questions as we are.
Therefore, many examples are available from which to learn, and the LET studied a number of
them. With over 1,300 member institutions, including CU Denver, the Association of American
Colleges and Universities (AAC&U) is a primary leader of and resource in this conversation. It is
time to join the national conversation.

These initial conclusions led the LET to its first recommendation, as stated in the January 2013 “Interim
Report #2”: that the college, and subsequently the university, consider adopting or adapting the
AAC&U’s Essential Learning Outcomes as the highest-order learning goals for all undergraduates (see
Appendix B for the ELOs). The rationale for selecting the ELOs, as opposed to many other options
considered, appears in that interim report (provided as Appendix C).
Rather than hold recommendations until a final report, the LET chose to consult, build consensus, and actively test ideas in collaboration with faculty and staff from the beginning. The taskforce worked from the grassroots upward, relying upon wide internal consultation, in addition to external expert consultation.

The CLAS Chairs/Directors were consulted throughout and provided regular feedback and consistent support (many thanks to them). In fall 2012, the LET administered a written survey to the chairs to help determine next steps (see Appendix D for the survey, and Appendix C includes a summary of responses). In spring and fall 2013, LET members delivered over 25 presentations and consultations with CLAS departments, as well as Student Government, upper administration, the Deans’ Council, Student Affairs, the Core Curriculum Oversight Committee, and Faculty Assembly (see Appendix E for a summary of faculty responses to those presentations). During that same period, LET administered a two-question survey to all CLAS faculty, asking which of the ELOs they consider most important for all undergraduates to learn and which they believe their program delivers. The questions and summary of the responses appear in Appendix F. 78% of the total 233 CLAS faculty completed the survey. This response rate and that the responses generally endorsed the ELOs provided strong validation for the LET. A more complete timeline of LET activities appears as Appendix G.

LET consultation with external experts included twice bringing to campus Dr. Terry Rhodes, AAC&U Vice President for Quality, Curriculum, and Assessment (in spring 2012 and fall 2013) and taking a team of six LET members to the AAC&U Institute, “Integrative Learning and the Departments: Faculty Leadership for the 21st Century,” held at Portland State University (July 10-14, 2013). The action plan that resulted from that working symposium, shown in Appendix H, provided key ideas and direction for subsequent work and the recommendations in this report.

Integration of curricula and “integrative learning” became guiding principles for the LET, as they have in discourse about higher-education reform across the country. Most simply, “integration” here means creating more meaningful and intentional connections between the often disjointed components of the whole educational experience. This pertains especially between the major and general education requirements, which often exist without reference to one another, but also across siloed majors and between them and co-curricular and experiential learning.

An integrative learning approach works toward more curricular coherence, which can be as direct as prerequisite enforcement but as complex as a learning community of three linked courses from multiple disciplines, plus accompanying co-curricular experiences, into which a cohort of students enrols. It is inherently interdisciplinary, deliverable for example through team-teaching, transferring knowledge from one discipline to a problem in another, or writing-intensive courses taught within major disciplines. It also is application-oriented, because students learn essential skills and dispositions best when exercised in a discipline of interest or applied in a real context they care about (which points also to integrating research into teaching). Integrative learning (further defined with examples in Appendix N) prepares graduates to be innovative and analytical thinkers but also self-reflective, civic-minded, and ethical thinkers who synthesize knowledge from multiple disciplines and experiences to address unscripted real-world problems. Integrative learning—“integrative” connoting an active process—is what students experience when faculty/staff are more intentional in designing the connections in the curricula and co-curricula and more explicit about that design and the learning goals upon which it is based.
The strongest conviction of the LET is that CU Denver can raise undergraduate learning, enhance students’ sense of belonging, improve retention and completion, and heighten the academic quality and the identity of our university by working collectively on reforms to increase integrative learning.

Recognizing that these issues are not limited to any one school or college but rather only can be pursued fully on behalf of all undergraduates across the undergraduate experience considered as a whole, the LET began over a year ago to invite all schools/colleges and student-service offices to become partners in this conversation. A natural partner was John Lanning and the Office of Undergraduate Experiences (OUE), which oversees a range of programs, such as first-year seminars, undergraduate research, and experiential learning, that are recognized nationally as High-Impact Practices (HIPs) because they are inherently integrative across disciplines, general education, co-curriculum, and community/professions.

The LET therefore asked to partner with OUE in fall 2013 on the 9th annual UE Symposium, “Making Integrative Learning Ours” (MILO), summary reports from which appear in Appendix O. The follow-up meeting with the UE Symposium table-leaders, representing all Denver-campus schools/colleges and most student-service offices, resulted in an action plan for ongoing consultation and a survey to all symposium attendees (Appendix P), culminating in a spring 2014 UE mini-symposium. Over 30 faculty and staff attended, including Chancellor Don Elliman, who expressed strong support (see Appendix Q for the summary). The campus-wide conversation will continue in fall 2014 with the 10th annual UE Symposium, which will have the same focus on integrative learning and the methods for further developing it, including the ELOs and the HIPs (Appendix R lists the HIPs). The work started by the LET will continue through Undergraduate Experiences and all of our partners, hopefully including all schools/colleges and certainly including many Student Affairs offices.

Creating a common vision of the undergraduate experience as a whole and an action plan for generating integrative learning structures and practices across campus is not without obstacles. There is a natural tendency of schools/colleges and of faculty culture to be discipline-centric and defensive around disciplinary and student-credit-hour territories. There is a long-standing academic culture that views “general education” as less important than disciplinary content, something to be gotten out of the way early rather than as something that when combined with disciplinary focus can enrich student learning of both content and essential skills and dispositions. There is an understandable fear that integrating shared learning outcomes such as the ELOs into majors might reduce coverage of disciplinary content, though there are good examples of how to spread the teaching/learning of essential skills and dispositions into the disciplines without cutting down on major credit hours. And, there is a justified fear among tenure-track faculty that giving more time and attention to the teaching-learning mission is not supported by the current CU Denver incentives and rewards system for faculty or by faculty culture.

The Office of Undergraduate Experiences and the LET members are not discouraged by these understandable concerns, and the recommendations that follow take them directly into account. Two and a half years of study and consultations, discussions and planning, have shown us that it can be done. First, hundreds of other universities successfully have or are implementing the recommendations below. Second, the majority of faculty and staff on our campus generally support the principles for which the LET has been advocating. Increasing integrative learning, teaching essential skills and dispositions, sharing learning outcomes across all undergraduates, advancing the teaching-learning mission, putting more into teaching development, tuning the faculty incentive/reward system—these generally make sense to most of us. The challenge now is to turn head-nodding into specific reforms, policies, and actions.
II. Recommendations, Action Steps, Resource Requirements

The LET makes the following recommendations as the surest steps for enhancing student learning, which in turn is the surest means for improving student success, retention, completion, and recruiting. The focus is on improving academic quality (as summarized under 2. on page 2 above), and this focus is justified on grounds that include return-on-investment, as supported by both national and CU Denver research (see for example Appendix S). Because these recommendations are relevant to all undergraduates, they are relevant to all schools and colleges, as well as all student-service offices.

Recommendation I: Strengthen the campus culture around teaching and learning.

A. **Value faculty development in teaching more highly**: Authorize a national search and hire a full-time director of the Center for Faculty Development (CFD) whose scholarly expertise and professional passion is faculty development. Give the campus a leader and activist for the teaching-learning mission and, therefore, for faculty development. View faculty development as the smartest investment in the resource with the highest impact on student learning and retention. **Lead actor(s)**: the provost’s office. **Resources**: a mandate and salary funding from the provost for this position and necessary staff.

B. **Value teaching equally in faculty review, incentives, and rewards**: Provide guidelines and training to revise unit bylaws and annual merit practices and inform the deliberations of the Vice Chancellor’s Advisory Committee (VCAC) to level the playing field between research/creative and teaching, not only in theory but in practice, a genuine 40%/40% balance. Charge the CFD with leading this conversation and providing training. **Lead actor(s)**: the provost’s office, schools/colleges, chairs and departments, the VCAC, and the CFD. **Resources**: a mandate from the provost to schools/college and to the VCAC and mandates by deans and chairs to their units.

C. **Prioritize teaching more highly in hiring**: Provide all academic units with encouragement, guidelines, and training to hire the strongest teachers, even those for whom being a master teacher is as high a professional commitment as scholarly/creative productivity. This is not to deemphasize research/creative but only to emphasize teaching equally. Charge the CFD with leading this cultural shift. **Lead actor(s)**: the provost’s office, deans, chairs, CFD. **Resources**: a mandate from the provost’s office and from the deans.

D. **Revise the FCQ and the FRPA**: Charge faculty governance bodies to review and revise the Faculty-Course Questionnaire and the annual Faculty Report of Professional Activities to more fully represent student (perception of) engagement and learning and faculty teaching engagement, preparation, and development. **Lead actor(s)**: the provost’s office and Faculty Assembly. **Resources**: a mandate from the provost.

E. **Release the study on faculty incentives and rewards**: A 2011 taskforce report on faculty rewards has not yet been made available for campus-wide discussion and potential reforms. **Lead actor(s)**: the provost’s office.

F. **Market our academic quality and commitment to learning**: Focalize the teaching-learning mission and the commitment to faculty and curricular quality in CU Denver identity and marketing. As part of this, widely adopt and publicize the undergraduate educational philosophy proposed in the 2009 Foundations of Excellence project (see Appendix T). **Lead actor(s)**: upper administration, University Communications, and schools/colleges. **Resources**: a mandate from the provost’s office and the deans.
**Recommendation II: Reaffirm campus-wide commitment to the teaching and learning of essential skills and dispositions for all undergraduates in all majors.**

A. **Adopt/adapt the ELOs as the campus’s common learning outcomes.** Charge the Office of Undergraduate Experiences (OUE) with collaborating with schools/colleges, Faculty Assembly, and Student Affairs to determine the final list of common outcomes. **Lead actor(s):** the provost’s office, OUE, deans, Student Affairs. **Resources:** a mandate from the provost’s office.

B. **Reconceptualize and Reform the CU Denver Core.** Charge the OUE and the Core Curriculum Oversight Committee (CCOC) with revising the common Core and Core policy to bring them in line with the ELOs and leading the campus through consultation and confirmation of the reformed Core. **Lead actor(s):** the provost’s office, OUE, CCOC, deans. **Resources:** a mandate from the provost’s office.

C. **Market CU Denver’s commitment to delivering essential skills and dispositions to all undergraduates.** Make common learning outcomes a signature of the campus, our guarantee to students, part of what distinguishes the education we offer and our institutional identity. Put them on websites and in marketing communications. Charge University Communications with determining a phrase less politically charged than “liberal learning” but that conveys the university’s commitment to the essential skills and dispositions that all students will need for success, that those are “learning with purpose.” Use that in marketing, as well as in orientation and advising. **Lead actor(s):** the provost’s office, University Communications, schools/colleges, Student Affairs and advising offices.

**Recommendation III: Integrate curricula across the entire undergraduate experience.**

A. **Integrate the general-education Core into the majors.** Charge the OUE and the deans to collaborate on a process whereby majors and the Core adopt and advertise shared learning outcomes, as judged appropriate by each discipline. For example, programs may consider integrating one or more of the ELOs into their program learning outcomes. Charge the Office of Assessment with providing guidelines and training. Perhaps use the CLAS questionnaire and guidelines (Appendices F and J). **Lead actor(s):** the provost’s office or AVC Academic Affairs, OUE, Office of Assessment.

B. **Integrate the disciplines further into the general-education Core.** Charge the OUE and the CCOCC with providing guidelines, for optional use, for creating discipline-grounded courses that deliver essential skills and dispositions through application to major content and that could count for both the major and the Core. Charge the CFD with providing training and support. **Lead actor(s):** the provost’s office or AVC Academic Affairs, OUE, CCOC, CFD.

C. **Make explicit learning outcomes a hallmark of CU Denver’s commitment to undergraduate education.** Charge all academic units and faculty (as well as Student Affairs offices) to explicitly publish learning outcomes at the program and courses levels. Program LOs, which ideally will have integrated ELOs-CoreLOs, should appear on each program website as a promise and selling-point to students: “this is what you will learn.” Course LOs, which ideally will have integrated one or more program LO, should appear in every syllabus on campus. Charge the Office of Assessment with providing guidelines and training for integrating program LOs into course LOs. **Lead actor(s):** the provost’s office or AVC Academic Affairs, the Office of Assessment. **Resources:** a mandate from the provost and the AVC for Student Affairs.

D. **Create more integration of curriculum and co-curriculum.** Charge leaders in both Academic Affairs and Student Affairs to form a committee to design additional ways that co-curricular
activities might be integrated into academic courses and programs. **Lead actor(s):** AVC Academic Affairs, AVC Student Affairs.

E. **Remove institutional barriers to team teaching.** Charge the Office of Administration and Finance (OAF), the Office of Academic Planning (OAP), and/or the Office of Institutional Research and Effectiveness (OIRE) with redesigning the university system for calculating the distribution of student credit hours between academic units such that the system encourages rather than creates barriers to interdisciplinary team teaching across academic units. **Lead actor(s):** the provost’s office, OAF, OAP, OIRE. **Resources:** a mandate from the provost.

**Recommendation IV: Increase student engagement and learning by increasing the availability of High-Impact Practices (see Appendix R).**

A. **Increase opportunities for service learning, community-based learning, and internships.** Charge the Experiential Learning Center (ELC) and the schools/colleges with doubling the current number of each of these before 2020. Charge the ELC with developing workshops on how to integrate experiential learning projects into programs and courses. Charge each dean to charge chairs with preparing a plan for integrating more experiential learning projects into programs and courses; collect and publish these. Charge OUE and Student Affairs with collaborating on a survey/inventory across campus of all current HIPs; use this information to showcase stellar examples for reference by other units. Charge the ELC and OUE with assessing learning in experiential learning projects using selected ELOs and the VALUE Rubrics that accompany them (Valid Assessment of Learning in Undergraduate Education, see Appendix U). Charge OUE and ELC with designing and circulating a potential plan for granting transcripted academic credit for experiential learning projects. **Lead actor(s):** the provost’s office, OUE, ELC, AVC Student Affairs, deans, chairs. **Resources:** a mandate from the provost’s office; funding for the three additional staff in the ELC necessary to pursue these goals: one Program Coordinator and Internship Advisor and two Graduate Intern Advisor positions, as detailed in the proposal in Appendix V.

B. **Create and expand a learning communities (LC) program.** Charge the OUE and counterparts in Student Affairs with building on the fall 2014 pilot of two LCs with the goal that by 2020 70% of all CU Denver freshmen will participate in a First-Year Seminar or LC. See Appendix W for an overview of the fall 2014 LC pilot project. Combine the LC program with a new gateway-courses program to include high-DFW (failure) lower-division courses in LCs, thereby giving those students a higher probability of success. Charge the CFD with providing guidelines and training for faculty preparing to participate in a LC. **Lead actor(s):** the provost’s office, leaders in Academic Affairs and Student Affairs, OUE, CFD. **Resources:** funding through the OUE for faculty to develop/redesign courses and collaborate on creating cross-disciplinary LC course clusters; continued funding for LC student-support services in Academic Affairs.

C. **Expand the first-year seminar (FYS) program and support the development of a transfer-student program.** Charge the OUE with expanding the FYS program and provide funding for new course development by faculty. Charge leaders in Academic Affairs with collaborating with Student Affairs partners to develop and propose a parallel transfer-student program. **Lead actor(s):** the provost’s office, OUE, leaders in Academic Affairs and Student Affairs, OUE, CFD. **Resources:** the provost continue to increase and protect funding for these efforts as they are scaled up.

D. **Create a Writing-in-the-Disciplines Program.** Charge the OUE and the English Department/Composition Program to design and pilot this program. Charge the CCOC, in consultation with English and Composition, with providing guidelines for building writing-
intensive courses that teach writing skills within another discipline for Core credit. **Lead actor(s):** the provost’s office, OUE, Department of English, Composition Program, CCOC. **Resources:** Resources from the provost to compensate Rhetoric and Composition faculty enlisted to serve as consultants, co-designers, mentors, and quality-control monitors.

E. **Increase undergraduate research.** Create and fund a position of Director of Student Research Opportunities, combining responsibilities for managing the existing Undergraduate Research Opportunities Program (UROP) and the annual Research and Creative Activities Symposium (RaCAS), reporting to the Director of the Experiential Learning Center (ELC) (who reports to the OUE). Charge these with doubling current levels of student, faculty, and industry/non-profit participation in student research. **Lead actor(s):** the provost’s office, OUE, ELC. **Resources:** funds from the provost’s office for a new director position.

F. **Increase learning with collaborative assignments and projects:** Charge the CFD with offering guidelines and a workshop on how to build peer-mentoring, group activities, and teamwork into courses and how to teach the accompanying skills to students (rather than merely making group assignments). **Lead actor(s):** CFD.

G. **Encourage the development of capstone courses.** Charge deans to charge each chair with creating, in consultation with her/his faculty, a proposal and design for a potential senior capstone experience that emphasizes project-or-problem-based and context-specific learning and that challenges students to demonstrate relative mastery in disciplinary content and, at the same time, exercise discipline-appropriate skills and dispositions from the ELOs/Core. Collect and publish these. **Lead actor(s):** the provost’s office, deans, chairs. **Resources:** a mandate from the provost.

H. **Integrate awareness of diversity/global learning into more course and co-curricular opportunities.** Continue the ongoing, highly effective work by the Office of Diversity and Inclusion in enhancing university-wide awareness and practices, the Office of International Affairs in providing study-abroad opportunities, the CFD in providing diversity-relevant training for faculty, and the CCOC, which includes in the current Core an International Perspectives and a Cultural Diversity requirement. Charge the OUE with placing a diversity requirement in all first-year seminar courses. **Lead actor(s):** Office of Diversity and Inclusion, Office of International Affairs, CFD, OUE, deans, chairs.

I. **Make ample opportunities for experiential learning and HIPs one of the selling points that distinguishes the CU Denver experience.** **Lead actor(s):** VC for University Communications.
Appendix B
The Essential Learning Outcomes+ ¹

Beginning in school, and continuing at successively higher levels across their college studies, students should learn:

Knowledge of Human Cultures and the Physical and Natural World

• Through study in the sciences and mathematics, social sciences, humanities, histories, languages, and the arts
  *Focused by engagement with big questions, both contemporary and enduring*

Intellectual and Practical Skills, including

• Inquiry and analysis
• Critical thinking
• Creative thinking
• Written communication
• Oral communication
• Reading
• Quantitative literacy
• Information literacy
• Teamwork
• Problem solving
  *Practiced extensively. across the curriculum, in the context of progressively more challenging problems, projects, and standards for performance*

Personal and Social Responsibility, including

• Civic knowledge and engagement—local and global
• Intercultural knowledge and competence
• Ethical reasoning and action
• Foundations and skills for lifelong learning
  *Anchored through active involvement with diverse communities and real-world challenges*

Integrative and Applied Learning, including

• Synthesis and advanced accomplishment across general and specialized studies
  *Demonstrated through the application of knowledge, skills, and responsibilities to new settings and complex problems*

¹ This list and the accompanying language are from the American Association of Colleges & University (AAC&U) LEAP (Liberal Education and American’s Promise) Program’s “Essential Learning Outcomes,” but slightly expanded in order to represent all of the AAC&U’s VALUE (Valid Assessment of Learning in Undergraduate Education) Rubrics, which is what the inserted “+” indicates.
High-Impact Educational Practices: A Brief Overview

The following teaching and learning practices have been widely tested and have been shown to be beneficial for college students from many backgrounds. These practices take many different forms, depending on learner characteristics and on institutional priorities and contexts.

On many campuses, assessment of student involvement in active learning practices such as these has made it possible to assess the practices’ contribution to students’ cumulative learning. However, on almost all campuses, utilization of active learning practices is unsystematic, to the detriment of student learning. Presented below are brief descriptions of high-impact practices that educational research suggests increase rates of student retention and student engagement. The rest of this publication will explore in more detail why these types of practices are effective, which students have access to them, and, finally, what effect they might have on different cohorts of students.

First-Year Seminars and Experiences
Many schools now build into the curriculum first-year seminars or other programs that bring small groups of students together with faculty or staff on a regular basis. The highest-quality first-year experiences place a strong emphasis on critical inquiry, frequent writing, information literacy, collaborative learning, and other skills that develop students’ intellectual and practical competencies. First-year seminars can also involve students with cutting-edge questions in scholarship and with faculty members’ own research.

Common Intellectual Experiences
The older idea of a “core” curriculum has evolved into a variety of modern forms, such as a set of required common courses or a vertically organized general education program that includes advanced integrative studies and/or required participation in a learning community. These programs often combine broad themes—e.g., technology and society, global interdependence—with a variety of curricular and cocurricular options for students.

Learning Communities
The key goals for learning communities are to encourage integration of learning across courses and to involve students with “big questions” that matter beyond the classroom. Students take two or more linked courses as a group and work closely with one another and with their professors. Many learning communities explore a common topic and/or common readings through the lenses of different disciplines. Some deliberately link “liberal arts” and “professional courses”; others feature service learning.

Writing-Intensive Courses
These courses emphasize writing at all levels of instruction and across the curriculum, including final-year projects. Students are encouraged to produce and revise various forms of writing for different audiences in different disciplines. The effectiveness of this repeated practice “across the curriculum” has led to parallel efforts in such areas as quantitative reasoning, oral communication, information literacy, and, on some campuses, ethical inquiry.
Collaborative Assignments and Projects
Collaborative learning combines two key goals: learning to work and solve problems in the company of others, and sharpening one’s own understanding by listening seriously to the insights of others, especially those with different backgrounds and life experiences. Approaches range from study groups within a course, to team-based assignments and writing, to cooperative projects and research.

Undergraduate Research
Many colleges and universities are now providing research experiences for students in all disciplines. Undergraduate research, however, has been most prominently used in science disciplines. With strong support from the National Science Foundation and the research community, scientists are reshaping their courses to connect key concepts and questions with students’ early and active involvement in systematic investigation and research. The goal is to involve students with actively contested questions, empirical observation, cutting-edge technologies, and the sense of excitement that comes from working to answer important questions.

Diversity/Global Learning
Many colleges and universities now emphasize courses and programs that help students explore cultures, life experiences, and worldviews different from their own. These studies—which may address U.S. diversity, world cultures, or both—often explore “difficult differences” such as racial, ethnic, and gender inequality, or continuing struggles around the globe for human rights, freedom, and power. Frequently, intercultural studies are augmented by experiential learning in the community and/or by study abroad.

Service Learning, Community-Based Learning
In these programs, field-based “experiential learning” with community partners is an instructional strategy—and often a required part of the course. The idea is to give students direct experience with issues they are studying in the curriculum and with ongoing efforts to analyze and solve problems in the community. A key element in these programs is the opportunity students have to both apply what they are learning in real-world settings and reflect in a classroom setting on their service experiences. These programs model the idea that giving something back to the community is an important college outcome, and that working with community partners is good preparation for citizenship, work, and life.

Internships
Internships are another increasingly common form of experiential learning. The idea is to provide students with direct experience in a work setting—usually related to their career interests—and to give them the benefit of supervision and coaching from professionals in the field. If the internship is taken for course credit, students complete a project or paper that is approved by a faculty member.

Capstone Courses and Projects
Whether they’re called “senior capstones” or some other name, these culminating experiences require students nearing the end of their college years to create a project of some sort that integrates and applies what they’ve learned. The project might be a research paper, a performance, a portfolio of “best work,” or an exhibit of artwork. Capstones are offered both in departmental programs and, increasingly, in general education as well.