



SPECIAL TOPIC Liberal Arts Mindset

LIBERAL ARTS LITERACY

"It is not always true that a person's major determines the types of jobs he or she is qualified for. A major does not equate with a job or set of jobs. And no one major guarantees that a person will obtain a job. Employers judge candidates according to the skills they possess and their ability to perform functions associated with the job. Today's liberal arts majors need to learn to think and speak with a skills vocabulary. The burden of proving that you are qualified for employment rests on you, not on the title of your major."

-BURTON JAY NADLER / *Liberal Arts Power*

"In industry, leaders respond with a strong endorsement of the liberal arts education as a prelude to many employment opportunities. Well-rounded candidates with evidence of creativity and leadership are most valuable in the job market."

-O'NEAL & WALLACE / *Journal of College Placement*

"I seek candidates who possess a liberal arts literacy. I seek people with a broader vision. I seek individuals who have a sense of history and perspectives from literature and art."

-MICHAEL THOMAS / Investment Banker and Businessman

"Liberal arts graduates have the qualifications employers seek, and, whether they know it or not, they have the capacity to market those qualifications successfully."

-BURTON JAY NADLER / *Liberal Arts Jobs*

"A liberal arts degree is more valuable today than ever before. And you are more prepared for the job market than you realize. In response to the shifting landscape of a global marketplace, companies now require employees who are generalists rather than specialists. No one is better equipped in today's world than liberal arts majors, whose scope is the big picture and whose sweep of study has trained them to think critically. You are uniquely qualified for the changes taking shape."

-GREGORY GIANGRANDE / *Liberal Arts Advantage*

SKILLS EMPLOYERS VALUE

What skills and competencies do employers value? What technical and practical abilities do they seek? What attitudes, traits and characteristics would most employers like their employees to have? What expectations do they have of the best candidates?

"Well-rounded candidates with evidence of creativity and leadership are most valuable in the job market."

-O'NEAL & WALLACE / *Journal of College Placement*

"Start with a solid education. And then specialize in something. There won't be much demand for generalists with no particular skills, nothing special to offer. At the same time, be flexible. Be open to change. Also, communication skills are a must, getting ideas across clearly."

-KIPLINGER WASHINGTON LETTER

“The qualities which appeal to me are honesty, candor, good judgment, intelligence, imagination, and the ability to write clearly and concisely.”

-HENRY FORD II / President of Ford Motor Company

“The attributes of graduates rated most highly are writing, public speaking, management supervision, reading and interpretation, and public relations.”

-COLLEGE PLACEMENT OFFICER / Michigan State University

“The new economy favors people with qualities like self-motivation, initiative, flexibility, ability to work with a team, and the capacity to learn and adapt to change.”

-LAURENCE BOLDT / *How To Find The Work You Love*

“I would advise today’s students to be adaptable. Be willing to do a lot of different things. Get your foot in the door.”

-RECENT COLLEGE GRADUATE / Middlebury College

LIBERAL EDUCATION

Liberally educated candidates in today’s ever-changing job market have a real edge over candidates who were more narrowly trained. Regardless of the particular academic major, candidates who are equipped with a liberal education will find a broader range of applications for their credentials.

“Liberal Education is an approach to learning that empowers individuals and prepares them to deal with complexity, diversity, and change. It provides students with broad knowledge of the wider world (e.g. science, culture, and society) as well as in-depth study in a specific area of interest. A liberal education helps students develop a sense of social responsibility, as well as strong and transferable intellectual and practical skills such as communication, analytical and problem-solving skills, and a demonstrated ability to apply knowledge and skills in real-world settings”

-AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF COLLEGES & UNIVERSITIES

“A liberally educated person is still the type of individual needed at the highest levels of corporate life. It is that peculiar mix of the behavioral sciences, natural sciences, mathematics, history, and English that produce a mind capable of bringing mature judgment to complex issues.”

-ROBERT CALLENDAR / President of Chemical Bank

“A liberal education is an education that exposes students to a wide breadth of courses, perspectives, and educational experiences designed to equip them with the essential skills and learning necessary to thrive and succeed throughout their lives. A liberal education prepares students to deal with complexity, diversity, and change. A liberal education helps students develop a strong sense of personal and social responsibility.”

-AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF COLLEGES & UNIVERSITIES

Students are better prepared for twenty-first-century challenges through a liberal education that includes these competencies:

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.

Intellectual and Practical Skills - Including Inquiry and analysis, critical and creative thinking, written and oral communication, quantitative literacy, information-gathering literacy, teamwork and problem solving.

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.

Integrative and Applied Learning - Including synthesis and advanced accomplishment across general and specialized studies.

-AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF COLLEGES & UNIVERSITIES

"The only education that prepares us for change is a liberal education. In periods of change, narrow specialization condemns us to inflexibility --- precisely what we do not need. We need the flexible intellectual tools to be problem solvers, to be able to continue learning over time."

-DAVID KEARNS / Xerox Corporation

"In an increasingly interdependent world, the ground is shifting in virtually every sphere of life. Characterized by constant change, the world itself is setting higher expectations for knowledge and skill from young adults, citizens, and workers at all levels --- knowledge and skill that can best be attained through a liberal education."

-AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF COLLEGES & UNIVERSITIES

PREPARE FOR CHANGE

"There is nothing permanent except change."

-HERACLITUS

"The most important thing to prepare yourself for is to change."

-DR. DAVID BIRCH

"Things are not like they used to be. Our economy has changed so rapidly that, for most of us, our concepts about how to plan our careers, and how to find a job, are completely out of date. The average person will change jobs far more frequently than their parents. They will also change careers far more often than in the past."

-J. MICHAEL FARR

"Almost everybody will have many careers. 1 in 5 people now change jobs every year. 1 in 10 people change careers or occupations every year. The average person entering the job market can expect almost no security from their employer. Security will have to come almost entirely from the individual and through self-improvement. Every career-oriented person will have to have many educations. And there will be many careers in many firms at many locations. You will have to take total responsibility for your continuing education, your own retirement, health care, and life insurance."

-DR. DAVID BIRCH

"Every year, three new technologies emerge as four old technologies become obsolete."

-KIPPLINGER WASHINGTON LETTER

"Millions of American workers today earn a living in occupations that did not exist at the beginning of the 20th Century. Job destruction is occurring in such occupations as railroad employees, telegraph operators, cobblers, switchboard operators and farm workers. Job creation is occurring in such occupations as airline pilots and mechanics, medical technicians, engineers, computer programmers, professional athletes, tv and radio announcers and optometrists."

-MICHAEL COX & RICHARD ALM

PRACTICAL ABILITIES

What intellectual and practical abilities are desired by employers?

The ability to communicate effectively, orally and in writing (89%)

Critical thinking and analytical reasoning skills (81%)

The ability to analyze and solve complex problems (75%)

Teamwork skills and the ability to collaborate with others in diverse group settings (71%)

The ability to innovate and be creative (70%)

The ability to locate, organize, and evaluate information from multiple sources (68%)

The ability to work with numbers and understand statistics (63%)

-HART RESEARCH ASSOCIATES / *Raising the Bar: Employers' Views on College Learning in the Wake of the Economic Turndown*

WORKPLACE COMPETENCIES

The changing workplace demands a change in the skills workers will now need to develop. The ability to deal with the ambiguities and complexities of an ever-changing work environment will be necessary. A flexibility and open-mindedness will be required in a setting that will be increasingly more diverse. A new set of expectations are now associated with the new world of work.

Learning Skills	Creative Skills
Language Skills	Critical Thinking Skills
Writing Skills	Problem Solving Skills
Reading and Research Skills	Leadership and Envisioning Skills
Computation and Analytical Skills	Team-Building Skills
Computer and Technical Skills	Multicultural and Intercultural Skills
Cognitive Reasoning Skills	Self Development Skills
Interpersonal Skills	Self-Management Skills

EMPLOYER PERSPECTIVES

88% of employers say that the challenges employees face within their organizations are more complex today than they were in the past.

88% of employers say that to succeed in their company or organization, employees need higher levels of learning and knowledge today than they did in the past.

66% of employers think that today's college graduates who want to pursue advancement and long-term career success need both a broad range of skills and knowledge and in-depth knowledge and skills applied to a specific field or position.

81% of employers want colleges to place more emphasis on teaching students oral and written communication skills, and critical thinking and analytical reasoning skills.

-AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF COLLEGES & UNIVERSITIES

PERSONALITY TRAITS

What attitudes, personality traits and dispositions would most employers like their employees to have?

Competence	Ability to do the job well
Initiative	Working on your own without constant direction or supervision
Dependability	Being there when you are needed
Reliability	Getting the job done
Efficiency	Being accurate and capable
Loyalty	Being faithful, trustworthy and honest
Maturity	Behaving as an adult, being stable and even-tempered, maintaining composure
Communication	Ability to express oneself clearly & concisely through speaking and writing
Problem-Solving	Ability to address issues, generate options, settle uncertainties, make decisions
Cheerfulness	Being pleasant, optimistic, and agreeable
Helpfulness	Willing to pitch in, serve, or assist with a sense of urgency
Teamwork	Working together with others, being cooperative and unselfish
Perseverance	Determination and patience in carrying on with a tedious project
Responsibility	Taking care of your duties and being accountable
Creativity	Being original, resourceful, imaginative, and innovative
Enthusiasm	Being energetic, positive, and self-motivated about your work
Adaptability	Ability to adjust to new situations and be flexible

FUTURE ORIENTED

Due to significant changes in the workplace, the best candidates entering the job market will be more flexible and more future-oriented. They will necessarily be someone who can adapt to change. They will assume responsibility for the future, assume a lifelong learning responsibility, and view the future with vision and imagination. They will have little fear of change. They can deal with uncertainty and ambiguity. They will believe that creativity is a basic requirement. They will be completely receptive to new ideas. And they will exhibit high levels of resourcefulness and imagination. To meet the challenges of the future workplace, careers must be flexible and adaptable, subject to constant change, able to adjust to any new task or situation. Flexible careers are fast becoming the careers of the future and the careers of workers who, being future-oriented, do not define themselves too narrowly.

EMPLOYER COMMENTS

Consider these excerpts of employer comments regarding the traits and characteristics that are of value in today's professional environment.

"Greater understanding of the human condition..."

"Well-rounded education..."

"Ability to express oneself clearly in writing and orally..."

"Common sense..."

"People oriented..."

"Ability to express ideas and thoughts convincingly and clearly..."

"Be a good learner..."

"Creativity, problem-solving, and critical thinking skills..."

"Working with others on a team in completion of a project..."

RATING CANDIDATES

When asked to rate the attributes most valued in candidates, one employer provided this chart. On a scale of 1-10 (with 10 being the highest rating), the employer expressed preference for these traits.

Work Ethic	10
Ability to Learn	8
Maturity	8
Communication Skills	7
Skills and Knowledge	6
Grades	5



Birmingham-Southern College | Office of Career Services

Box 549010 | Norton Campus Center 214 | (205) 226-4719 | (205) 226-4717