



Critical Inquiry, Civic Engagement, and Out-of-Class Learning: Preparing Liberal Arts Majors for a Variety of Careers

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Abstract

Business leaders and graduates appreciate the importance of general liberal arts skills (e.g., writing, critical thinking) for careers; many students and parents do not. We describe the integration of practical experiences, including civic engagement, into General Education and majors at an institution serving a high percentage of first-generation college students.

In particular, we highlight a means by which students majoring in a wide variety of disciplines can strategically select electives to develop specific skills to enhance their prospects for a variety of career paths.

Institutional Context

- Primarily residential, about 20,000 students—many first-generation
- College includes professionally-oriented programs, such as Journalism and Actuarial Science
- Strong tradition in Teacher Education (18 of 24 majors)

General Education Establishes a Foundation

- Articulated course sequence in Composition and Communication for all first-year students
 - Ensures continuity of focus on critical thinking
 - Overlapping projects in each course
 - English, Communication, and Library collaboration
- Critical thinking and general research skills as basis for academic and professional success

American Democracy /Political Engagement Projects

- ADP: Fostering intellectual and experiential understanding of civic engagement
- PEP: strengthen student interest in politics and public policy
- Integrated into General Education
- Model for connecting course work to practical issues

Professional Preparation in the Majors

- All departments offer service-learning and internship opportunities
- Leadership and skill development opportunities via shared governance

Beyond Internships: Career Competency Combinations

- Groups of interdisciplinary courses; NOT a major or minor
- Designed to provide knowledge, skills, and background appropriate for six broadly defined areas:
 - Administrative and Corporate Communication
 - Public Policy Analysis
 - Human Resources Management
 - International Affairs
 - Research and Planning
 - Technical Communication
- Articulates with existing opportunities for
 - Service-learning
 - Professional Practice
 - Internship
 - Study Abroad
- Advisement role
 - Purposeful selection of Elective courses
 - Career planning
 - Resume/interview preparation

Administrative and Corporate Communication

- Students with these competencies might enter the business world in advertising, public relations, journalism, media production, or sales. These skills are also valuable for jobs in economics, politics and government, business organization, and public relations.

- Competence in these positions requires facility in using the language—both orally and in writing.

- Writing and critical thinking skills (9 hours)

- Administrative and interpersonal communication skills (6 hrs)

- Understanding of the institutional environment (9 hours from two departments)

Public Policy Analysis

- Students with these competencies may work in corporate governmental relations offices or private non-profit organizations. Such positions requires knowledge of political institutions and processes, the history of governmental policy, economic analysis, and the ability to compile, interpret, and communicate relevant information.

- Economic, political, historical, and social understanding of society and current policies (9 hours from three departments)

- Environmental understanding of our world (6 hours)

- Quantitative skills (3 hours)

- Writing and communication skills (6 hours from two departments)

Human Resources Management

- Students with these competencies may work in government or industry with recruitment, training, testing, and orientation. Analysis, writing, and interpersonal skills are critical.

- Analytical and quantitative skills (3 hours)

- Development of research skills (3 hours)

- Understanding of human behavior (6 hours)

- Understanding of the institutional environment (6 hours from two departments)

- Communication skills (6 hours from two departments)

International Affairs

- Students with these competencies may work in private industry as well as governmental service. Careers include international marketing and sales, public relations and in international organizations. Those with highly developed language skills may find opportunities for careers in translating, interpreting, or tourism.

- Proficiency in one or more foreign languages is strongly advised.

- Focus on a geographical, historical, political, and cultural overview of a specific area or country (Minimum of 12 hours from three departments)

- Areas of interest include: Latin America, Europe, Africa, Middle East, Russia, Asia

- International affairs (6 hours from two departments)

- Communication skills (6 hours from two departments)

Research and Planning

- Preparation for careers in corporate planning (i.e. forecasting), budgeting, market research, inventory control, and urban planning and development. Computer, statistical and modeling skills are prerequisites for such careers.

- Statistical skills (6 hours from two departments)

- Modeling skills (6 hours)

- Planning skills (6 hours—not from major department)

- Writing and communication skills (6 hours from two departments)

Technical Communication

- Students with these competencies may work as writers in business, industrial, and professional settings. Technical Communicators work with diverse groups and are often responsible for project planning and project management. To perform these tasks, they must possess skills in writing, editing, and visual design, as well as in print and electronic publishing

- Students who choose this career competency combination may want to consider developing a concentration in a second area.

- Skills in verbal, visual, and digital Technical Communication (12 hours)

- Skills in oral, small group, and interpersonal communication (6 hours)

- Communication skills with study in language and ethics (3 hours)

- Contextualize classroom experiences—internship in Technical Communication through major or minor department (3 hours)

www.cas.ilstu.edu/current/career_competencies.shtml

The screenshot shows the Illinois State University website's Career Competency Combinations page. The page title is "Career Competencies" and the URL is "http://www.cas.ilstu.edu/current/career_competencies.shtml". The page content includes a navigation menu, a search bar, and a main section titled "Career Competency Combinations". Under this section, there is a "What are the CCC's?" section, a "Why should I complete a CCC?" section, and a "How do CCC's relate to other special programs at the University?" section. The page also features a sidebar with "Current Students" and "Career Competencies" sections.

Contact for More Information

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