FAQ's About Career-Related Liberal Arts Skills

What are "liberal arts skills?"

Liberal Arts Skills are transferable, functional skills that are required in many different problem-solving and task-oriented situations. They are built into your liberal arts education and are valued by all employers.

How can I assess my liberal arts skills?
As you take your undergraduate courses, you may wonder how they are going to help you eventually "on the job." A good approach is to take a skills orientation or assessment. Think of your courses not only as ways of gaining knowledge, but as ways of learning and refining a variety of skills. A bit of reflection will show that your courses, as well as your work experience and extra-curricular activities, are providing you with skills that employers value. If asked in a job interview how your education has prepared you for a specific job, you can be ready with some good answers if you think about it beforehand.

This handout gives you some ideas about skills which you will gain or refine with your liberal arts education and which will be valuable to an employer.

Information Management Skills: ability to...

- sort data and objects
- compile and rank information
- apply information creatively to specific problems or tasks
- synthesize facts, concepts and principles
- understand and use organizing principles
- evaluate information against appropriate standard

Design & Planning Skills: ability to...

- identify alternative courses of action
- set realistic goals
- follow through with a plan or decision
- manage time effectively
- predict future trends and patterns
- accommodate multiple demands for commitment of time, energy and resources
- set priorities

Research & Investigation Skills: ability to...

- use a variety of sources to access information including computer technology
- apply a variety of methods to test the validity of data
- identify problems and needs
- design an experiment, plan or model that systematically defines a problem
- identify information sources appropriate to special needs or problems
- formulate questions relevant to clarifying a particular problem topic or issue

Valuing Skills: ability to...

- assess a course of action in terms of its long-range effects on the general human welfare
- make decisions that will maximize individual and collaborative good
- appreciate the contributions of art, literature, science and technology
- assess self values in relation to important life decisions
- identify one's own values

Communication Skills: ability to...

- listen with objectivity and paraphrase the content of a message

- communicate with words
- speak to individuals and groups
- use media formats to present ideas imaginatively
- express one's needs, opinions, wants and preferences without violating the rights of others
- identify and communicate value judgments effectively
- describe objects or events with a minimum of factual errors
- convey a positive self-image to others
- Use a variety of computer programs to facilitate communication

Human Relations & Interpersonal Skills: ability to...

- keep a group moving toward the achievement of a common goal
- maintain group cooperation and support
- delegate tasks and responsibilities
- interact effectively with peers, superiors, and subordinates
- express one's feelings appropriately
- understand the feelings of others
- use argumentation techniques
- be willing to take risks
- make commitments to persons
- teach a skill, concept or principle to others
- analyze behavior of self and others in group situations

Management & Administration Skills: ability to...

- analyze tasks
- identify people who can contribute to the solution of a problem or task
- identify resource materials useful in the solution of a problem or task
- delegate responsibility for completion of a task
- motivate and lead people
- organize people and tasks to achieve a specific goal

Personal / Career Development Skills: ability to...

- analyze and learn from life experiences- both one's own and others
- relate the skills developed in one environment (e.g., school) to the requirements of another environment (e.g., work)
- match knowledge about one's own characteristics and abilities to information about job or career opportunities
- identify, describe and assess the relative importance of one's needs, values, interest, strengths, and weaknesses

Critical Thinking Skills: ability to...

- identify quickly and accurately the critical issue when making a decision or solving a problem
- identify a general principle that explains related experiences or factual data
- define the parameters of a problem
- adapt one's concepts and behavior to changing conventions and norms
- apply appropriate criteria to strategies and action plans
- take given premises and reason to their conclusion
- analyze ideas and events