

Graduate Profile: 10 Essential Skills & the Levels of Mastery

The Levels of Mastery

Benchmark: Level of each skill upon entry into college.

Milestone: Progress in each skill after the completion of two years of college.

Capstone: Goals for students to have in each skill when they earn their Bachelor's degree.

More information on the 10 Essential Skills can be found [here](#).

Communicate effectively.

- **Benchmark:** Asks questions to clarify understanding. Expresses thoughts and ideas through writing. Shares content through one-on-one and small group conversations.
- **Milestone:** Gives focused attention to others, asks clarifying questions, and shows awareness of non-verbal signals. Writes formally and informally using logical structure, complete sentences, standard grammar and correct punctuation. Engages in formal conversations with peers and professionals by offering information and ideas.
- **Capstone:** Facilitates conversation by using active listening techniques and non-verbal signals. Tailors written communication to the audience and situation, such as using professional vocabulary and tone and a logically organized structure that is suited to the context and purpose. Prepares, structures, and delivers an oral presentation in a professional setting.

Think critically to solve problems and create new ideas and solutions.

- **Benchmark:** Describes a problem in general terms based on gathered information. Acknowledges personal perspectives and how these may help or hinder problem-solving. Compiles possible solutions that are loosely connected to a problem. Contributes ideas that reflect an understanding of a problem in a brainstorming session.
- **Milestone:** Identifies aspects of a problem clearly by locating and using relevant sources of information. Seeks out and considers different perspectives on a problem. Articulates patterns, relationships, context, and other factors that are relevant to a problem. Links concepts to generate novel ideas or solutions to problems.

- **Capstone:** Analyzes a problem and its components accurately using credible sources, data, and information. Evaluates alternative perspectives, allowing new information to add depth to thinking about a problem. Evaluates reasonable implications and weighs and synthesizes significant evidence and relevant perspectives to draw informed and innovative conclusions about a problem and potential solutions. Integrates diverse perspectives to propose an innovative idea or solution.

Apply quantitative reasoning skills to analyze and solve numerical problems.

- **Benchmark:** Identifies key information from data presented in multiple forms, including equations, graphs, and tables. Performs basic arithmetic operations on real numbers within complex order of operations including the calculation of percentages and basic statistics. Demonstrates relevance of quantitative data in identifying problems and related assumptions.
- **Milestone:** Illustrates contextual data using a variety of models, including equations, graphs, and tables. Applies percentages and statistics to describe contextual data. Utilizes a variety of quantitative strategies to articulate assumptions and solve problems.
- **Capstone:** Analyzes real-world data (e.g. case studies, simulations, and experiments) using appropriate quantitative and qualitative strategies. Differentiates between appropriate and inappropriate uses of statistics within real-world contexts in the presentation of arguments. Applies quantitative reasoning to real-world scenarios to reach well-reasoned and data-informed conclusions.

Interact effectively with others.

- **Benchmark:** Shows foundational self-awareness by articulating own background, biases, and lived experiences. Recognizes how different backgrounds impact interactions. Demonstrates awareness of the existence of multiple perspectives, ideas, and cultural beliefs.
- **Milestone:** Identifies how one's own background, biases, and lived experiences impact perspectives. Identifies positive ways to interact with people from different backgrounds. Identifies multiple perspectives, ideas, and cultural beliefs through interactions.
- **Capstone:** Articulates insights into one's own background, biases, and lived experiences to mitigate biases and create openness to new perspectives. Creates positive interactions with people from different backgrounds. Engages effectively with individuals from different backgrounds by applying insights about one's own background and beliefs to mitigate biases and bridge differences.

Adapt to changing circumstances while leading and supporting others.

- **Benchmark:** Describes how people can cooperate to reach a common goal. Explains how new situations may require a change in the way things are done. Recognizes how people are motivated by others to achieve a goal.
- **Milestone:** Contributes toward achieving a common goal. Adjusts to new situations by doing things differently and showing a positive mindset. Encourages others to persist in achieving goal(s) through changing situations.

- **Capstone:** Overcomes barriers or obstacles to achieving a common goal, often by providing guidance and support to others. Responds to and anticipates change by practicing and modeling new strategies and tools to thrive in a dynamic environment. Coaches others through changing situations.

Perform professionally.

- **Benchmark:** Demonstrates honesty, fairness, and respect when engaging with others. Acknowledges how meeting deadlines and being punctual impact success. Demonstrates reliability by meeting obligations and following through on commitments. Exhibits a desire to learn about professional fields of study.
- **Milestone:** Describes what constitutes ethical behavior and makes choices accordingly. Applies organizational and time management skills to prioritize and complete assigned tasks. Takes personal accountability for actions, including mistakes. Converses with others using field-specific terminology and tools.
- **Capstone:** Models ethical behavior and adheres to a professional code of ethics, as applicable. Shows initiative by leveraging organizational and time management skills to proactively seek professional opportunities for growth. Uses feedback from others to improve performance. Stays current with industry standards, including best practices and technological tools within the chosen profession.

Engage in civic life to improve society.

- **Benchmark:** Respectfully discusses basic ideas related to public policy and the social good, expressing one's own opinions and acknowledging those of others. Articulates knowledge of democratic principles and the impact of individual and community involvement in American government (both historical and current). Describes opportunities for individuals or groups to engage in civic life to bring about positive change.
- **Milestone:** Engages with others who represent diverse perspectives on public policy and the social good through active listening, clear and responsive dialogue, and collaboration. Leverages knowledge of the impact of the civic participation of individuals and communities on public policy to plan for social action. Presents persuasive arguments for social action initiatives based on reflection and analysis of personal experiences, observation, and outside knowledge or perspectives.
- **Capstone:** Assesses fact-based dimensions of community-based problems to generate solutions that reflect multiple needs and perspectives by engaging with others and credible resources. Collaborates to engage community stakeholders in civic action that targets appropriate levers for civic change. Tailors communications to elicit support for civic action in response to the needs, interests, and/or potential contributions of different audiences, integrating reflection on the impacts of that action.

Collaborate and work in teams.

- **Benchmark:** Supports team decisions by participating in discussions. Responds promptly to messages and requests for information. Completes tasks on time and recognizes how individual responsibilities impact team goals. Acknowledges both strengths and limitations within a team.
- **Milestone:** Contributes ideas aligned to identified objectives of the team. Addresses conflicts constructively, communicating expectations and adjusting own behavior based on feedback received. Identifies tasks required to reach a goal and learns about team members' assets to support the distribution of roles and responsibilities. Adapts to changing project requirements and roles in a way that fosters mutual trust and respect amongst team members.
- **Capstone:** Advocates for evidence-based solutions that promote the teams' identified objectives. Fosters strong team cohesion by giving and soliciting feedback and responding transparently. Collaborates with multiple teams, utilizing different perspectives and skills to achieve common goals. Navigates between leading and supporting through advocacy for mutual goals and integration of team members' strengths.

Apply academic knowledge, skills, and abilities.

- **Benchmark:** Identifies the type of work within their desired career path and how this work aligns to career opportunities. Describes foundational knowledge, skills and abilities needed for career. Engages in career exploration, while considering personal strengths, interests, values, and goals.
- **Milestone:** Applies learned knowledge to resolve foundational problems pertinent to their desired career pathway. Explains concepts that support the practical application of knowledge, skills, and abilities related to professional interests. Reflects on personal and academic experiences to assess compatibility and provide reasoning for career choice.
- **Capstone:** Analyzes and solves complex, real-world problems in the field using advanced knowledge, skills, and abilities to achieve solutions. Integrates academic learning with hands-on experience to critically assess and solve complex challenges encountered in professional environments, providing a clear rationale tailored to a range of stakeholders. Articulates career development plan that builds on prior learning and experiences to define clear goals for achievement and continued learning after graduation.

Use information for decision making.

- **Benchmark:** Identifies topics requiring information to make a decision. Develops basic search strategies on given topics with familiar resources. Identifies strengths and weaknesses of information sources. Describes the primary ideas in a variety of sources when making a decision. Identifies the source of information used for decision making.
- **Milestone:** Develops questions with the appropriate scope for the field. Implements search strategies to find information using credible resources relevant to the field. Analyzes strengths and weaknesses of information sources to identify elements of bias, expertise, and point of view. Identifies connections between relevant sources to make a decision. Provides appropriate recognition of sources used for decision making.

- **Capstone:** Articulates questions informed by key concepts, relevant terminology, and related questions in the field. Executes well-developed search strategies that consider all available resources and revises the strategy as necessary. Critiques information sources to thoroughly evaluate bias, expertise, point of view, and relevance and currency to the field. Synthesizes patterns across sources, excluding irrelevant information to draw conclusions and reach and communicate informed decisions. Attributes ethically accessed information consistently using conventions appropriate to the field.