# COLLEGE-WIDE OUTCOMES - OFFICIAL INTERPRETATIONS

These official interpretations state faculty developed definitions (italicized) of the key terms in Lake Superior College's college-wide student learning outcomes, including explanatory notes.

## PROFESSIONAL AND PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITIES

**Professional Demeanor:**

*Students demonstrate professional demeanor when presenting themselves in a manner appropriate to the organizational context.*

Clarifications:

The term "organization" is used broadly in these definitions and clarifications to include classrooms, workplaces, internships, clinicals, volunteer organizations, and other similar settings.

Professional demeanor is meant to be assessed objectively based on appearance and actions, including but not limited to observable behaviors such as:

- Displaying friendliness, empathy, and politeness in any situation.
- Dealing with unpleasantness appropriately; acting respectfully when facing disagreement or difference.
- Being assertive when appropriate.
- Demonstrating confidence in abilities and seeking clarification when needed.

Appropriate presentation requires an understanding how professionals in each context act, and then conforming.

**Initiative:**

*Students illustrate initiative when making a concentrated effort to improve the organization by meeting and exceeding expectations.*

Clarifications:

Initiative must be exercised within the bounds of the organization's best interests. Examples of initiative include showing up early, participating in creative problem-solving, and utilizing problem-solving, creativity and vision to accomplish tasks and goals.

**Accountability:**

*Students demonstrate accountability when they take personal responsibility for modeling and working with others to meet organizational expectations.*

Clarifications:

Organizational expectations include stated and unstated policies and expectations of supervisors/coworkers (instructors/classmates). Taking personal responsibility assumes willingness to accept constructive criticism and participate in self-reflection and correction, resulting in new learning, growth, and change.  The locus of control is internal, not external.

**Adherence to Organizational Expectations:**

*Students adhere to organizational expectations when they abide by stated policies and directives.*

Clarifications:

The policies and directives may be organizationally specific and are communicated by any authorized representative of the organization. Common policies and directives include, but are not limited to, timeliness, dress and grooming, and productivity.

**Self-Development:**

*Students engage in self-development when they intentionally pursue the opportunities, skills, knowledge, data, and resources necessary to achieve personal goals.*

**Lifelong Learning:**

*Lifelong learning is a continuous quest for knowledge and skill acquisition that persists beyond formal education.*

**INTELLECTUAL AND PRACTICAL SKILLS**

**Critical Thinking:**

*A student with critical thinking skills is able to intentionally respond to open-ended problems or situations by (a) identifying and weighing relevant factual information, (b) considering and acknowledging multiple perspectives, (c) employing appropriate problem solving strategies, and (d) evaluating the appropriateness of conclusions or results against relevant values.*

Rationale:

Subsections (a), (b), (c), and (d) correspond to the Factual, Imaginative, Rational, and Evaluative modes of thinking that together make up the FIRE Model of critical thinking. The same four modes of thinking are directly reflected in the student competencies for the Critical Thinking goal area of the Minnesota Transfer Curriculum. Therefore, this definition is consistent with and conforms to the Minnesota Transfer Curriculum. There are many other definitions of critical thinking, but using one here would mean we would have two different definitions applicable at the same time to transfer courses.

Clarification:

Critical thinking skills include the ability to:

- Distinguish fact from opinion
- Distinguish relevant from irrelevant information in a given context
- Consider other's situations and viewpoints
- Apply prior learning to new situations
- Explain how a conclusion was reached

A student with well-developed critical thinking skills is also:

- Aware of his or her own thought processes (metacognition)
- Disposed to use critical thinking skills without prompting (habit of mind)
- Aware of the limitations of his or her critical thinking skills (intellectual humility)

The distinction between critical thinking skills and well-developed critical thinking skills is a distinction between *having* the skills and consciously or habitually *using* those skills. The outcome is for students to *have* critical thinking skills, but we aspire for students to *use* those skills.

**Creative Thinking:**

*A creative thinker is able to generate and recognize ideas that are original and useful.*

Rationale:

In an academic context, creative thinking is more than just coming up with new ideas (divergent thinking).  It also includes use of those ideas in the real world (convergent thinking).

The terms "generate," "recognize," and "original" address the divergent part of the definition.  The term "useful" addresses the convergent part of the definition.

Creative thinking is at times a purposeful process and at other times spontaneous.  The term "generate" implies a process while "recognize" contemplates noticing and seizing upon a moment's inspiration.  The term "original" means original to the creative thinker, not novel or original to the world.

An idea may be judged useful because it helps solve a problem, but usefulness is broader than that.  Usefulness also includes adaptation, such as learning from failure or making adjustments based on experience.  Note, that we intentionally did not specify to whom an idea must be useful.

**Information Literacy:**

*A student who is information literate can effectively locate, evaluate, and use relevant information.*

**Inquiry and Analysis:**

*Inquiry is the systematic collection of evidence.  Analysis is the process of breaking complex topics into their component parts and using the relevant evidence to gain a better understanding for the purpose of reaching informed conclusions.*

Clarification:

The terminology and processes for inquiry are discipline specific.  Part of inquiry and analysis is choosing the right terminology and processes for a given problem.  For instance, the scientific method is appropriate for a problem requiring scientific inquiry and analysis.

**Quantitative Literacy:**

*A student who is quantitatively literate can use logic, numbers, symbols, and math concepts to solve problems.*

**Synthesis and Application:**

*Students are synthesizing when they combine diverse or seemingly unconnected concepts and ideas to produce new meanings, patterns, or structures.*

*Application is the ability, when confronted with new situations, problems, or tasks, to use what one has previously learned.*

**Teamwork and Problem Solving**

*Teamwork is interacting and contributing effectively with others to collaboratively complete a task.*

*Problem solving is the process of designing and implementing an effective strategy to achieve a goal.*

**Written Communication:**

*Students who are competent written communicators effectively develop and express ideas in formal and informal writing.*

Clarifications:

- Good formal writing includes support appropriate to the context (such as scientific, informative, argumentative, or creative).
- Informal writing includes text messaging, use of social media, and other types of correspondence.

**Oral Communication**

*Students who are competent oral communicators effectively develop and express ideas when making presentations to groups and interacting interpersonally.*

Clarifications:

- Presentations include traditional public speaking and use of supportive technology.
- Interacting interpersonally includes traditional face-to-face communication, as well as communication using social media and other technologies.
- Interacting interpersonally includes speaking, listening, feedback, teamwork, and problem solving.

## SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITIES

### Awareness and Practice of Sustainability:

*A student who is aware of and practices sustainability supports the roles that healthy environments, healthy economics, and social justice play in meeting current and future needs.*

Definitions:

"Needs" addresses the needs of the individual, the larger community, and the environment.

"Healthy economics" refers to economic practices that make wise use of resources; follows the concept of reduce, reuse, and recycle; and produces minimal amounts of waste.

A "healthy environment" maintains or improves biodiversity and ecological integrity, minimizes man-made disruptions, and is able to repair and replenish itself.

### Civic Involvement:

*A student who is civically involved works to make a positive difference in the community on issues of personal or public concern.*

Clarifications:

- Civic involvement is both individually life enriching and socially beneficial to the community.  It may be, but is not necessarily, characterized by involvement in civic, charitable, or religious organizations.
- Issues of personal or public concern may be local, state-wide, regional, national, or global in nature.
- Effective civic involvement requires students to develop the combination of knowledge, skills, values, and motivation necessary to make a difference.

### Ethical Reasoning and Action:

*A student engages in ethical reasoning by intentionally considering what is right and wrong human conduct.*

Clarifications:

- Ethical reasoning requires an awareness of one's own values and understanding of the social context in which ethical issues arise.  The ability to reason ethically develops and evolves with practice.
- Ethical reasoning typically reflects consideration of different ethical perspectives and the ramifications of alternative courses of action.

- Ethical reasoning can be expected to produce ethical action.  The goal is for each student to develop the intellectual tools required to identify ethical dilemmas and use ethical reasoning to resolve them.

**Intercultural Competence:**

*Students demonstrate intercultural competence when they are aware of their own cultural beliefs and are willing to step outside those beliefs to understand and communicate effectively with others.*