

# **The Core Curriculum and the Pursuit of Academic Excellence**

a presentation by  
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**American Council of Trustees and Alumni**

**The College of William and Mary**  
**Sadler Building**  
**October 27, 2011**



**ACTA**  
AMERICAN COUNCIL OF  
TRUSTEES AND ALUMNI

# AN EXTRAORDINARY HERITAGE

- Thomas Jefferson
- James Monroe
- John Marshall
- **Thirty-One** Governors
- **Sixty** Members of the U.S. Congress  
or State Legislatures



# WHAT will they LEARN?

A guide to what college rankings don't tell you.

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- NJ
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- MD
- DC

The search for the right college can be overwhelming. So many guides, so many rankings. There is one thing none of them will tell you: which universities are making sure their students learn what they need to know.

This free resource does just that, focusing on seven key areas of knowledge. It's designed to help you decide whether the colleges you're considering prepare their graduates to succeed after graduation.

To locate a school, choose a state from the map on the left or use the form below.

FIND A SCHOOL

NAME OF UNIVERSITY

SELECT A STATE

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SEE WHICH COLLEGES REQUIRE THESE CORE SUBJECTS

COMPOSITION	LITERATURE	FOREIGN LANGUAGE	U.S. HISTORY	ECONOMICS	MATHEMATICS	SCIENCE

## College of William & Mary

WILLIAMSBURG, VA

William and Mary says to students, "There's a lot of flexibility in how you choose to mix and match your [general education courses]. This is a good chance to stretch your comfort zone and experience academic fields you're less familiar with. Or explore what you know you like from a different perspective or methodology." [\[Source\]](#)

**WEBSITE:** <http://www.wm.edu/>  
**GRADUATION RATE:** 91%  
**TUITION & FEES (IN STATE):** \$12,188 annually  
**TUITION & FEES (OUT OF STATE):** \$33,212 annually



Grading is based on a detailed review of the latest online course catalogs. [View the rating criteria »](#)

[COMPARE THIS SCHOOL TO OTHERS](#)



### GENERAL EDUCATION REQUIREMENTS

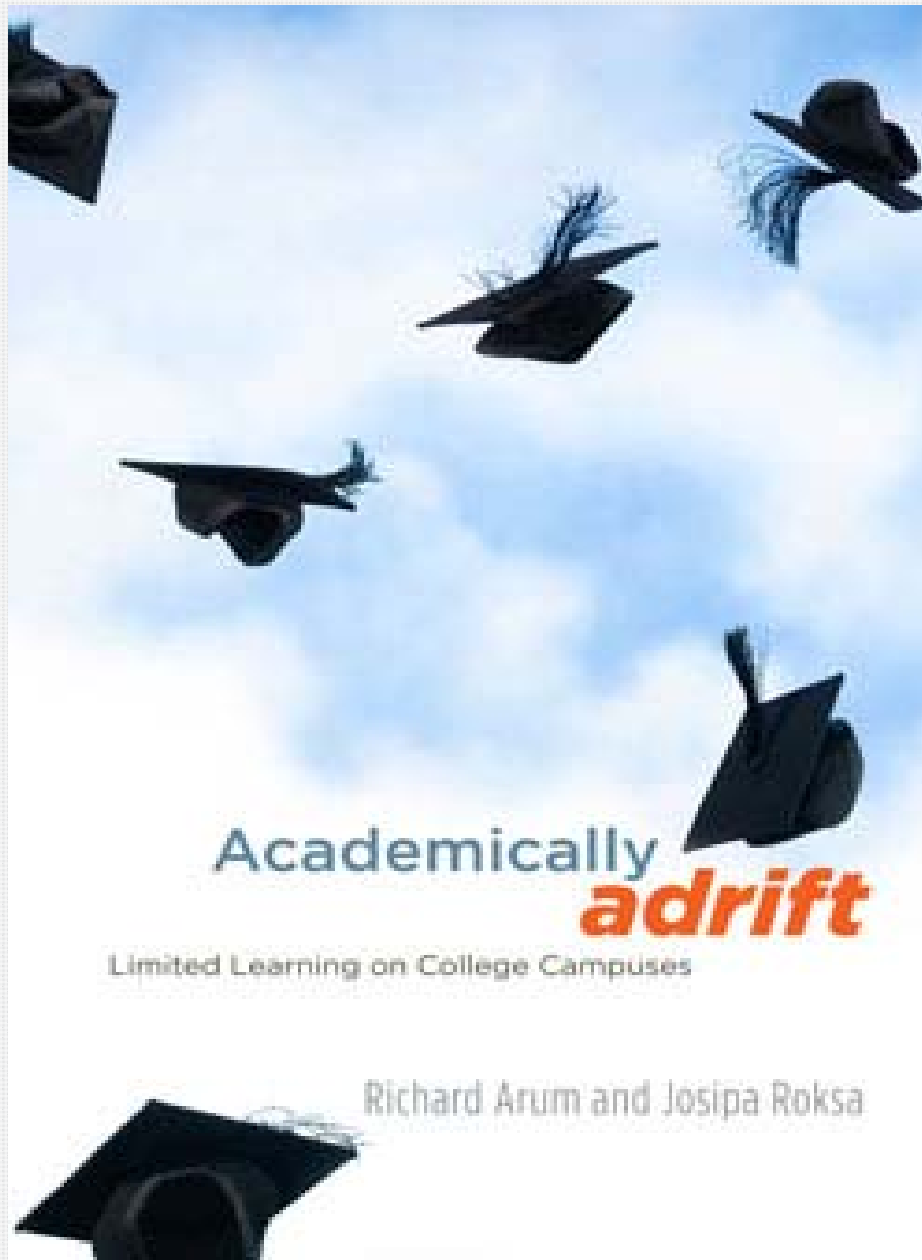
1. Composition	NO
<input type="checkbox"/> <a href="#">See Note</a>	
2. Literature	NO
3. Foreign Language	YES
4. U.S. Government or History	NO
<input type="checkbox"/> <a href="#">See Note</a>	
5. Economics	NO
6. Mathematics	YES



# What Business Leaders Have to Say

- Partnership for 21st Century Skills:  
23.9% of employers find 4-year college graduates' overall preparation for entry-level jobs, "excellent." 64.5% say "adequate."
- 26.2% find their writing skills "**deficient**"

Linda Barrington and Jill Casner-Lotto, *Are They Really Ready to Work? Employers' Perspectives on the Basic Knowledge and Applied Skills of New Entrants to the 21st Century U.S. Workforce* (The Conference Board, Corporate Voices for Working Families, The Partnership for 21st Century Skills and the Society for Human Resource Management, 2006)



Richard Arum and Josipa Roksa, *Academically Adrift. Limited Learning on College Campuses* (Chicago:University of Chicago Press, 2011)



**Forty-five percent of students did not demonstrate any significant improvement in learning, as measured by CLA (=Collegiate Learning Assessment) performance, during their first two years of college.**

**Considering all four years of college, we find that 36 percent of students did not demonstrate any significant improvement in learning, as measured by CLA performance.**

Richard Arum, Josipa Roksa, Esther Cho, *Improving Undergraduate Learning: Findings and Policy Recommendations from the SSRC-CLA Longitudinal Project* (New York: Social Science Research Council, 2011)

[http://www.ssrc.org/workspace/images/crm/new\\_publication\\_3/%7Bd06178be-3823-e011-a477ec84%7D.pdf](http://www.ssrc.org/workspace/images/crm/new_publication_3/%7Bd06178be-3823-e011-a477ec84%7D.pdf)

## Does This Have Anything to Do With Us?

“There is more variation within institutions than across institutions. Although institutional selectivity is related to students’ experiences and growth in the CLA, high- and low-performing students can be found at each institution and within each level of selectivity.”

Richard Arum, Josipa Roksa, Esther Cho, *Improving Undergraduate Learning: Findings and Policy Recommendations from the SSRC-CLA Longitudinal Project* (New York: Social Science Research Council, 2011) [http://www.ssrc.org/workspace/images/crm/new\\_publication\\_3/%7Bd06178be-3823-e011-ade0-001cc477ec84%7D.pdf](http://www.ssrc.org/workspace/images/crm/new_publication_3/%7Bd06178be-3823-e011-ade0-001cc477ec84%7D.pdf)



**National Perspectives on Historical Illiteracy**  
ACTA, *Losing America's Memory* (February 2000)

Survey of 556 college seniors at the Top 25 National Universities  
and the Top 25 National Liberal Arts Colleges.

- Beavis and Butthead 99%
- Snoop Doggy Dog 98%
- George Washington as general at Yorktown 34%
- James Madison as Father of the Constitution 23%
- Abraham Lincoln as author of the words:  
“Government of the people, by the people,  
for the people” 22%

## James Madison 1822

Learned Institutions ought to be favorite objects with every free people. They throw that light over the public mind which is the best security against crafty & dangerous encroachments on the public liberty. ...

What spectacle can be more edifying or more seasonable, than that of Liberty & Learning, each leaning on the other for their mutual & surest support?

# WWJMS?



# GE-4A (History and Culture of the European Tradition) Fall 2011

- American History to 1877 (seven sections)
- Art History I
- Jazz
- Philosophic History of American Environmentalism
- History of Western Music

# Why English Composition?

“What Should Colleges Teach,” by Stanley Fish  
New York Times, August 24, 2009

“A few years ago, when I was grading papers for a graduate literature course, I became alarmed at the inability of my students to write a clean English sentence. They could manage for about six words and then, almost invariably, the syntax (and everything else) fell apart.

As I learned more about the world of composition studies, I came to the conclusion that **unless writing courses focus exclusively on writing they are a sham**, and I advised administrators to insist that all courses listed as courses in composition teach grammar and rhetoric and nothing else.



*College of William and Mary*

**Freshmen Seminars/Lower Division Writing Courses**

Emerging Diseases (Biology)

Beyond Petroleum as Fuel (Chemistry)

The Art of Detection (English)

Detective Fiction (English)

Food in World History (History)

Mafia Representations (Italian)

**WWSFS?**

# Accessibility and Advantages of a Strong Core

- 30 Hours (maximum)
- One Quarter of the Credits for Graduation
- Responds to call from business and industry
- Confidence in the quality of W&M graduates, especially **expository writing** and understanding of **American institutions**
- Creation of a learning community with common academic themes
- Cost savings through large, team-taught courses
- Creation of a faculty community



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# Are We Underfunded?

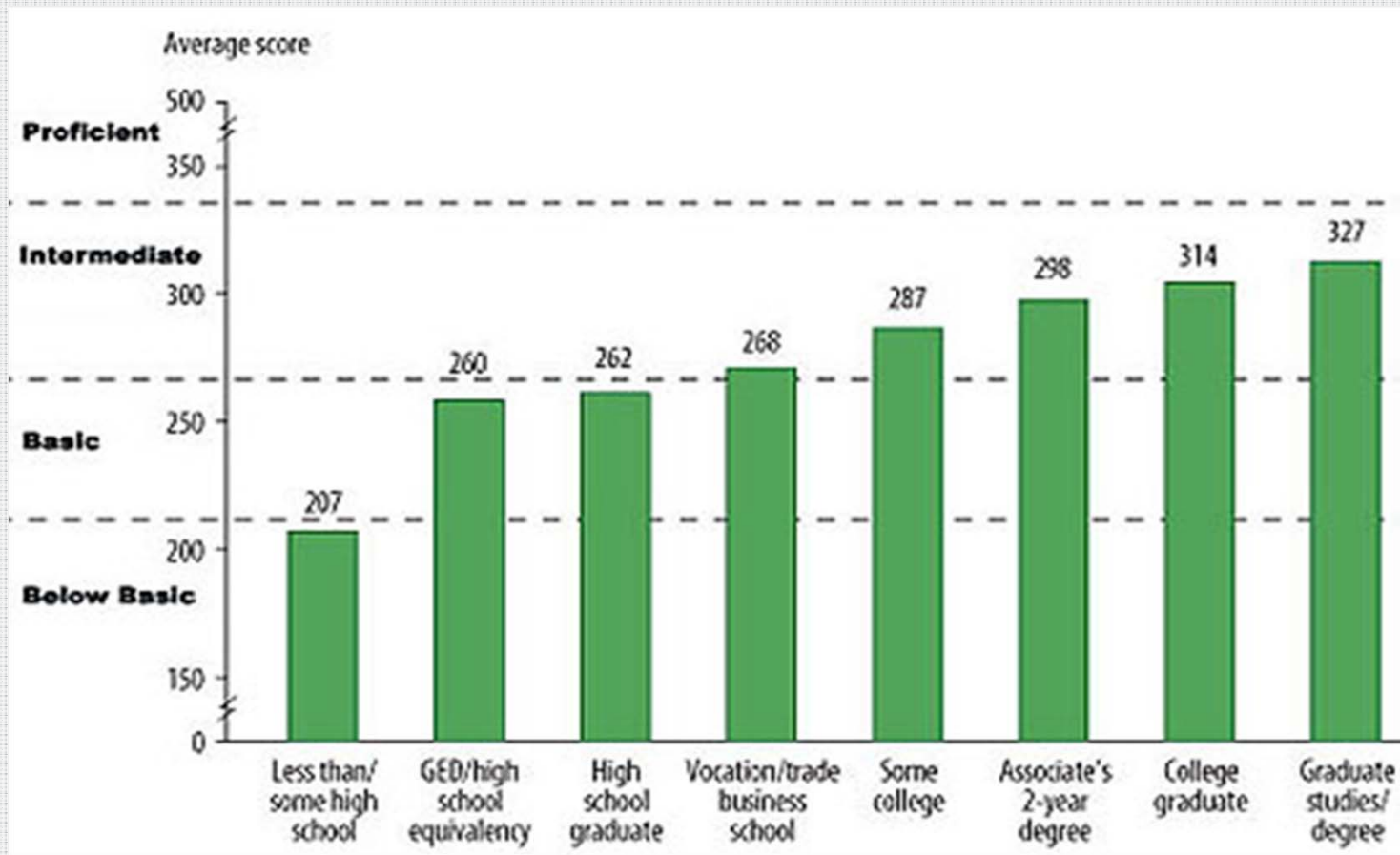
## Education Expenditures by Country

At the combined elementary and secondary level in 2006, the United States spent \$10,267 per student, which was 41 percent higher than the OECD average of \$7,283. **At the postsecondary level, U.S. expenditures per student were \$25,109, more than twice as high as the OECD average of \$12,336.**

Aud, S., Hussar, W., Planty, M., Snyder, T., Bianco, K., Fox, M., Frohlich, L., Kemp, J., Drake, L. (2010). *The Condition of Education 2010* (NCES 2010-028). National Center for Education Statistics, Institute of Education Sciences, U.S. Department of Education. Washington, DC.  
NCES 2010-



# National Assessment of Adult Literacy



# “What Do We (They) Mean By Proficient

**Proficient** indicates skills necessary to perform more complex and challenging literacy activities.

Score ranges for *Proficient*:

Prose: 340–500

Document: 335–500

Quantitative: 350–500

- reading lengthy, complex, abstract prose texts as well as synthesizing information and making complex inferences
- integrating, synthesizing, and analyzing multiple pieces of information located in complex documents
- locating more abstract quantitative information and using it to solve multistep problems when the arithmetic operations are not easily inferred and the problems are more complex
- comparing viewpoints in two editorials
- interpreting a table about blood pressure, age, and physical activity
- computing and comparing the cost per ounce of food items



# GE-5 (Literature/History of the Arts) Some Options (Spg 2010 - Fall 2011)

- **Victorian Supernatural**
- **British Literature I&II (multiple sections)**
- **Intro to Shakespeare**
- **Detective Fiction**
- **American Popular Music (also GE-4)**
- **Contested Spaces in Post-Colonial Literature**
- **History of American Vernacular Dance**
- **Jazz**
- **Music and Film**

# College of William and Mary

## Fall 2011

### Freshman Seminar/Lower Division Writing

- **EVERYTHING'S COOL: THE RHETORIC OF CLIMATE CHANGE.** Communicating scientific information to the general public is challenging, especially when the data lead to politically charged recommendations. As one filmmaker demonstrates, the public is likely to react to disconcerting information by choosing to believe that "everything's cool." This seminar will analyze the rhetorical strategies of scientists, journalists, and documentary filmmakers who seek to explain global warming and persuade stakeholders to take action. Students will practice writing about climate change for a variety of purposes, media, and audiences.



**College of William and Mary  
Fall 2011**

**Freshman Seminar/Lower Division Writing**

- **FR SEM:** This reading, writing, and discussion-intensive seminar is designed to allow students to explore the world of Sherlock Holmes (SH), Conan Doyles (sic) great detective. We will examine the genesis of Daoyle (sic) creation, read extensively from the stories, and give emphasis to their translation into visual media. We will explore the very early use of forensic techniques in SH and in Vistorian (sic) England, as well as explore the evolution of forensic detection as it is used by SH's literary descendants. This course satisfies the Lower-Division Writing Requirement.