BRIEF: Alumni Perspectives - UB Contribution to Important Skills and Competencies

In a recent survey of those who graduated from UB with an undergraduate degree in either 1991 or 1994, respondents were asked to rate the importance of several skills and competencies to their current endeavors, and then to indicate how their UB undergraduate education contributed to their growth in each skill or competency. The alumni rated the importance of each skill or competency on a five-point scale where 1 indicated "No Importance" and 5 indicated "Very Great Importance". The table below shows each skill or competency, its mean importance to the alumni, and the mean contribution alumni feel that UB made to their growth in this area. The table displays the skills from the most important to the least important.

Clearly some of the listed skills and competencies are planned outcomes of an undergraduate education while others, although desirable, are not planned. Still others are not deemed to be directly related or intended outcomes of higher education. The alumni were not asked to indicate whether they expected UB to contribute to their development in each skill area. However, there is a strong correlation (r = .70) between importance and contribution, meaning that UB is doing best in training persons for skills and competencies deemed most important in their careers.

Importance in Current Position	Skill / Competency	Contribution of UB Education
Mean		*Mean*
5.00 Very Great Importance		
4.36	Developing problem-solving skills	3.69
4.31	Working as a team member	3.42
4.27	Thinking and reasoning systematically	3.71
4.25	Developing a sound base of knowledge and skills	3.71
4.24	Developing time management skills	3.32
4.18	Getting along with people-different attitudes & opinions.	3.50
4.18	Speaking effectively	3.11
4.12	Engaging in life-long learning	3.54
4.12	Developing self-confidence	3.30
4.11	Setting clear goals	3.21
4.09	Writing effectively	3.52
4.09	Developing leadership skills	3.12
4.03	Getting along people various cultures, races & backgrounds	3.58
4.04	Applying computer skills and related technology	3.16
4.02	Developing ethical standards and values	3.16
4.00 Great Importance		
3.84	Developing original ideas or products	3.16
3.77	Managing personal finances	2.48
3.67	Developing healthy lifestyle	2.74
3.56	Applying scientific knowledge and skills	3.46
3.39	Applying mathematics and statistics	3.37
3.39	Reading with greater speed and accuracy	2.84
3.29	Learning about career options	2.79
3.29	Exercising rights, responsibilities & privileges as citizen	2.77
3.00 Moderate Importance		
2.95	Developing awareness of environmental issues	2.73
2.94	Understanding international issues	2.69
2.86	Appreciating literature and fine arts	2.97
2.00 Little Importance		
1.00 No Importance		**(over)**

The importance of, and UB contribution to, particular skills vary somewhat by discipline. For this reason, and the fact that the Social Sciences and the Arts and Letters majors are underrepresented in the sample compared to the proportion of students enrolled in those disciplines during their undergraduate experience, the three most important skills (in descending order of their mean importance) for each major discipline are shown below. Again, the mean UB contribution to the student's development of each skill or competency is displayed.

Importance in Current Position	Skills / Competencies by Discipline	Contribution of UB Education
Mean		*Mean*
	Architecture and Environment	
4.42	Developing original ideas or products	4.60
4.37	Working as a team member	3.83
4.32	Developing problem-solving skills	4.06
	Business	
4.27	Developing problem-solving skills	3.61
4.26	Developing time management skills	3.31
4.25	Working as a team member	3.47
	Social Sciences	
4.40	Developing problem-solving skills	3.97
4.39	Get along with people of different attitudes & opinions	3.24
4.38	Speaking effectively	2.78
	Engineering and CIS	
4.56	Developing problem-solving skills	3.97
4.54	Applying computer skills and technology	3.24
4.41	Thinking and reasoning systematically	3.81
	Arts & Letters	
4.63	Developing sound base of knowledge & skills	3.89
4.46	Get along with people of different attitudes & opinions	3.70
4.36	Developing original ideas or products	3.85
	Math & Science	
4.67	Applying scientific knowledge & skills	3.83
4.33	Developing sound base of knowledge & skills	3.44
4.33	Working as a team member	3.50
	Health	
4.45	Working as a team member	3.52
4.35	Developing problem-solving skills	3.74
4.35	Developing sound base of knowledge & skills	3.99

With the exception of Arts & Letters, "Developing problem-solving skills", or "Working as a team member" was in the top 3 competencies in importance for all disciplines. Other skills or competencies placed in the top three, are appropriate within discipline.