**Critical and Creative Thinking at the University of Wyoming:   
The Backbone of a Liberal Education**

**THE VALUE OF CRITICAL AND CREATIVE THINKING**

* **Employing our graduates**: Year after year, employers of college graduates rank critical thinking and problem-solving skills as their highest priority
* **Maintaining our accreditation**: HLC (UW’s accrediting body) requires the University to offer programs that engage students in collecting, analyzing, and communicating information; in mastering modes of intellectual inquiry or creative work; and in developing skills adaptable to changing environments
* **Meeting student learning outcomes**: Both UW and WDE identify critical and creative thinking amongst their essential student learning outcomes
* **Preparing informed and engaged citizens**: The backbone of a liberal education, CCT skills underpin a host of skills required for an engaged citizenry, including information literacy; digital and media literacy; intercultural competence; climate literacy; financial literacy; conscientiousness; personal responsibility; character development

**Moreover…**

Nationwide, HE faculty place high value on CCT but lack language for discussing it, strategies for teaching it, and methods for assessing

**…Yet**

**“**Most college faculty lack a substantive concept of critical thinking…do not (and cannot) use it as a central organizer in the design of instruction… do not link it to the essential thinking that defines the content they teach” (the Foundation for Critical Thinking)

**CRITICAL AND CREATIVE THINKING AT UW**

**University Studies Program (USP) 2015**:

* **Six student learning outcomes** (SLOs) related to critical and creative thinking contribute to USP’s overarching objective: “develop skills necessary for full participation in a technologically complicated world”
* The First-Year Seminar is the **ONLY** course at UW **required** to meet all six
* Human Culture (H), Physical and Natural World (PN), and US and Wyoming Constitutions (V) must meet two

**Beyond USP**

* 15 academic degree programs in five different Colleges or Schools identify CCT as student learning outcomes
* At least ten other degree programs list SLOs that overlap significantly with CCT

**THE BOTTOM LINE**

“Changing colleges to embrace both methods and a culture of critical thinking does not require overhauling education, eliminating courses or even asking professors to sacrifice approaches they have developed and used successfully. It simply involves adding new tools to their arsenal that allow them to accomplish what they already wholeheartedly support: helping students develop the skills needed to think critically about the world” ([Jonathan Haber](https://www.insidehighered.com/views/2020/03/02/teaching-students-think-critically-opinion), March 2020).

The Ellbogen Center for Teaching and Learning: We’re here to help.