

Employers and graduate programs are often very interested in knowing what *personal competencies* you have acquired, in addition to the subjects covered directly in your coursework, and the skills needed to learn those subjects. Organizations sometimes call such competencies KSAs (knowledge, skills, abilities), KSAOs (knowledge, skills, abilities, and other characteristics), or KSAPs (knowledge, skills, abilities, and personal characteristics), all of which refer to measurable or observable sets of traits and capabilities thought to be critical to success in a job-related assignment or function. Some of these, such as motivation, self-control, and values, might be considered personality traits, and are harder to document (especially about oneself). Other competencies can be demonstrated by describing the task performed, the group involved, and your own role within that organizational setting.

By getting involved in groups during your college career, both on and off campus, you have a chance to establish a record of your competencies, which can then be documented by awards and recognition, letters of recommendation, and other means. To this end, you are encouraged to plan out your co-curricular activity over the next five years in much the same way as you are formulating your coursework:

- First, identify five competencies from the list below that you think will be important in your career after graduation. If there are non-academic competencies of importance to you that are not listed, simply add them – items on the list are only suggestions.
- Second, write a short description of each competency, so that you (and others) can be clear about what exactly you are interested in accomplishing.
- Third, identify five campus groups or organizations that you believe will give you an opportunity to demonstrate each of your chosen competencies, and briefly explain how you think that will work.
- Finally, schedule each group and the matching competency on the five-year planner, by writing the name of the organization under “Course” and the competency under “GE/Major” on the last line of the Fall semester for each year. Success in an organization often takes time—to establish relationship and earn the confidence of others—so consider devoting yourself to any group you join for at least two semesters. And remember that (as with your coursework) changes made to any one area of your schedule may require rethinking the other areas.

Competencies List

Communication skills
 Community Service
 Creativity
 Decision making (planning)
 Diversity
 Flexibility/Adaptability

Independence
 Initiative
 Integrity (professionalism, character)
 Leadership
 Management skills (interpersonal,
 organizational)

Perseverance
 Punctuality
 Responsibility
 Self-confidence
 Teamwork