THE CHARGE OF THE TASKFORCE

“The core curriculum for all degrees offered by the College of Arts and Sciences will be evaluated when appropriate, at least once every ten to fifteen years by a committee of Arts and Sciences faculty members appointed by the Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences. This review will evaluate the size and content of the core curriculum in light of this vision statement. Following this review, the committee will make recommendations for revisions of the core curriculum to the Arts and Sciences Council of Chairs.”

College of Arts and Sciences Core Curriculum Vision, p. 4. Approved May 2016, Council of Chairs, College of Arts and Sciences

JANUARY 26, 2017: EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In Attendance

• The following members of the Executive Committee of the Taskforce were present: Tamarah Adair (BIO), Sara Alexander (ANT), Mark Anderson (ART), Michael Beaty (PHI), Joseph Brown (PSC), Blair Browning (COM), Julie deGraffenried (HIS), Stan Denman (THEA), Steven Driese (GEO/SC), Chris Hansen (FDM), Jeanne Hill (STA), John Howard (alumni representative), Ken Jones (CLA), Kristin Koch (student representative), Heidi Marcum (ENV SC), Alex McNair (MLC), Carson Mencken (SOC), Brian Raines (MTH), Dwight Russell (PHY), Lisa Shaver (ENG), Sara Stone (JOU), Charles Weaver (PSY/NSC), Doug Weaver (REL). The following were unable to be present: Thomas McGrath (CHE).

• The following members of the Working Groups of the Taskforce were present: Frieda Blackwell, Burt Burleson, Gary Carter, Lana Conder, Kim Kellison, Deanne Kramer, Frank Mathis, Paul Martens, Joyce Miller, Wes Null, Viola Osborn, Ken Wilkins.

Semester Goals

• Blake Burleson, the Project Manager, reminded the taskforce that their goal is to make a recommendation to the Council of Chair on May 11 that would include:
  1. Common courses in the core
  2. Distribution List course rules
  3. Size of the core (including common and DL courses)
Proposals for Common Courses

- The model for the new core curriculum calls for common courses (that all students take) and distribution list courses (that students choose from). The 5 subcommittees met during the first three weeks of the semester to consider proposals for the common course area. A total of 13 proposals were received totaling 31 hours. 2 of the 5 subcommittees presented proposals. (New Courses are italicized.)

- Brian Raines, chair of the Critical Thinking Subcommittee, introduced the following proposals: ENG 1302: Thinking and Writing; ENG 1304: Thinking, Writing, and Research; PHI 1306: Logic; and PHI 23XX: Contemporary Ethical Issues.


- No proposals for common courses were submitted by the Scientific Reasoning subcommittee.

- Proposals from the Creativity subcommittee and the Christian Tradition subcommittee will be presented on February 2.

UPCOMING

February 2 Taskforce Plenary meeting
- Stan Denman, chair of the Creativity Subcommittee, will present the following proposals: ENG 2310: British Literature and CREA 10XX: Quality Cultural Events (6 semesters).

- Julie deGraffenried and Doug Weaver, co-chairs of the Christian Tradition subcommittee, will present the following proposals: Chapel (2 semesters), REL 1310: Christian Scriptures, and REL 1350: Christian Heritage.

- The 3 working groups will provide reports related to the 13 proposals for common courses.

- The Executive Committee will take a non-binding straw vote on the 13 proposals for common courses.

February 3-9 Subcommittees meetings
- Revise common course proposals based on feedback from plenary meetings of January 26 and February 2
- Begin discussion on distribution list course rules

February 8 Steering Committee meeting with Dean
- Identifying consensus and disagreement on common course proposals

February 13-17 Subcommittees meetings
- Continued development of distribution list course rules
QUESTIONS REFERRED TO WORKING GROUPS

The following questions were asked at executive plenary, subcommittee, or working group meetings and have been referred to the working groups. The most recent questions are added to the end of the list in bold. Questions lined through have been answered and provided to the taskforce in their notebooks.

Analytics-Budget Working Group

• What impact would a smaller core have on opportunities for graduate students to teach?
• What impact would smaller class sizes have on classroom space utilization?

Oversight-Integration Working Group

• In revising the core are there issues that must be addressed with SACS and the University’s General Education Council? If so, how will coordination occur?
• What impact would changing the A&S core have on the core curriculum requirements for other academic units at Baylor? Would a smaller core curriculum entice departments to add required courses in their majors?
• What is the relationship of the A&S Core Curriculum Vision to the University’s general education requirements?
• Should all core courses have a common prefix? At present the prefix follows the department. Having a common prefix might alleviate the idea that departments have “ownership” over core courses.
• Are there courses that may not be adjusted or eliminated from the current core due to University requirements?
• Is there evidence that the large core for the BA or BS degrees (given its size as compared to peer and Texas institutions) is having a negative effect on enrollment in those degrees?
• What does the term “non-burdensome” as related to size in the A&S Core Curriculum Vision actually mean?
• How will the core be unified? Common courses for all students? Common texts within common courses? Other ways?
• Taking into account transfer courses (including dual-credit courses brought in by freshmen), what is the average number of general education credits earned at Baylor University by Baylor graduates and by graduates in the College of Arts and Sciences?
• Does the A&S Core Curriculum Vision address “second-level core” requirements?

Curriculum Development Working Group

• Have other academic units at Baylor changed their core requirements recently and, if so, what can we learn from them?
• If core requirements are required to be the same no matter what the degree, what distinguishes the BA and BS in departments that offer both degrees (e.g., BIO)?
• What kinds of structural-advising pieces must be in place to insure that seniors are not taking freshman-level core requirements?
• Could there be common core requirements (for all degrees) and then a second-level of requirements based on the type of degree (i.e., BA, BS, BFA, BSAS)?
• What does the core curriculum entail for BFA degrees from some of our peer institutions?
• What would be the impact on retention or graduation rates if the BA in BIO (or other science majors) is eliminated?
EMERGING ISSUES TO BE CONSIDERED BY EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

This is a list of issues emerging that are being addressed by the executive committee in subcommittees or plenary sessions. The newest issues are added to the end of the list in **bold**.

- Balancing required common core courses with the desire for students to have flexible exploration
- Including co-curricular requirements (e.g., service, fine arts) in the core
- Including study abroad as a core requirement
- Should a required core course also be required in a student’s major?
- What percentage of be core might reasonably be upper-level?
- To what extent can the 5 subcommittees (Scientific Method, Critical Reasoning, Civic Engagement, Creativity, and Christian Tradition) separate their work since all courses should be mutually-supportive and interconnected?
- How is the desire for electives, undergraduate research, study abroad, and secondary majors to be balanced with the desire for a substantive common core? How is the imperative for a large number of hours in the major (such as in the BFA) to be balanced with the desire for a substantive common core?
- To what extent should practical, extrinsic factors be considered in determining the size of the core curriculum? To what degree is the large core curriculum of A&S an issue in the recruiting, retention, and graduation of undergraduates in A&S?
- In what way, if any, is the size of the core curriculum related to the quality and rigor of the core curriculum? Can the core be improved and reduced in size?
- Does the A&S Core Curriculum Vision suggest a particular model for delivering the core curriculum? Are some models incompatible with the Vision?
- Will a modified distribution list model adequately support the A&S Core Curriculum Vision requirements?
- How might the modified distribution list model fail to support the A&S Core Curriculum Vision requirements?
- What courses will populate the core curriculum? How many core course sections in each department will be needed to support the new core?
- **What rules will govern the distribution list area?**

A WORD FROM PROJECT MANAGER

Colleagues,

I’d like to pay a special thanks to the following executive committee members who wrote common course proposals: **Mark Anderson, Mike Beaty, Joseph Brown, Blair Browning, Stan Denman, Chris Hansen, Julie deGraffenried, Heidi Marcum, Brian Raines, Lisa Shaver, and Doug Weaver**. The quality of your proposals was evident to all of us. It reminded me of Khalil Gibran’s statement that “work is love made visible.”

Blake Burleson
January 27, 2017