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

MARCH 13, 2017: EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In Attendance

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

• The following members of the Working Groups of the Taskforce were present: Viola Osborn and Lynn Wisely.

Proposals for Common Courses

• The model we are considering for the core curriculum calls for common courses (that all students take) and distribution list courses (that students choose from). The 5 subcommittees met from February 3 to March 3 to consider proposals for distribution lists. A total of 10 proposals were received totaling 48 credit hours. And 1 new common course was also received. (A total of 14 common course proposals totaling 34 credit hours have now been received although 3 of those common proposals have subsequently been withdrawn.) The total number of hours for the combined common courses and distribution list courses is 82 credit hours.

• Stan Denman presented a Fine Arts/Performing Arts DL proposal for 3 hours.

• Chuck Weaver presented two Scientific Method DL proposals for 7 hours.
• Brian Raines presented Quantitative Reasoning DL and Critical Thinking DL proposals for 3 hours each.
• Lisa Shaver presented a Research Writing DL proposal and a Literary Interpretation Common Course proposal for 3 hours each.
• Julie deGraffenried presented a History DL proposal for 6 hours.
• Alex McNair presented a Foreign Language Acquisition DL proposal for 12 to 14 hours.
• Ken Jones presented a Foundations of the Modern World DL proposal for 3 hours.
• Sara Alexander presented a Contemporary Social Issues DL proposal for 9 hours.

Announcements
• Blake Burleson provided an updated spring schedule (enclosed) and noted that the original time table for town halls and dean-sponsored luncheons was pushed back to allow subcommittees more time to finalize first drafts of common course and DL proposals.
• A referred question on the average number of general education credits earned at Baylor University by Baylor graduates and by graduates in the College of Arts and Sciences was answered. See enclosed.
• Lynn Wisely provided information on how the second straw vote would be conducted by Qualtrics.
• Voting Protocols as approved by the Steering Committee were disseminated. See enclosed.

UPCOMING

March 20, 24, 27   Town hall meetings
• All full-time A&S faculty members will be given the opportunity to provide input to steering committee members on the ideas under consideration for the core.

March 29, March 30, March 31, April 3, April 5   Luncheons for A&S Chairs and Executive Committee
• Selected Executive Committee members will present arguments for inclusion of common courses or distribution lists to the Executive Committee and to A&S chairs.

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?
• How are individual departments impacted by the proposed changes to the core?
• Which distribution lists will populate the core curriculum?

A WORD FROM PROJECT MANAGER

Colleagues,

I’d like to thank each executive committee member who wrote proposals for the distribution list courses. And thanks to each subcommittee for reviewing these excellent proposals.

We’ve made good progress but we still have a ways to go before we begin drafting a proposal for the Council of Chairs. Above all we want to make sure we are proceeding at a pace that works for each of you and for the College. Along with the Steering Committee, I will continue to seek your guidance as we move towards an eventual conclusion of our shared work, either this spring semester or next fall.

Blake Burleson
March 14, 2017