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

APRIL 12, 2017: EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In Attendance

• The following members of the Executive Committee of the Taskforce were present: Tamarah Adair (BIO), Mark Anderson (ART), Michael Beaty (PHI), Joseph Brown (PSC), Blair Browning (COM), Julie deGraffenried (HIS), Stan Denman, Steven Driese (GEOSC), (THEA), Chris Hansen (FDM), Jeanne Hill (STA), Ken Jones (CLA), 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), Doug Weaver (REL). The following were unable to be present: Sara Alexander (ANT), John Howard (alumni representative), Kristin Koch (student representative).

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

Feedback from Working Group members on Second Straw Vote

• Advising Scan #3: Blake Burleson provided handouts from Curriculum Development Working Group members Deanne Kramer and Joyce Miller.

• Provost feedback: Blake Burleson provided a handout from Oversight-Integration Working Group member Wes Null.

• Vision Test #3: Paul Martens, Oversight-Integration Working Group member, provided feedback related to the A&S Core Curriculum Vision.

• Stress Test #3: Viola Osborn, Analytics-Budget Working Group member, provided an analysis of representation and capacity issues for each department based on the second straw vote.
Proposals

- Blair Browning presented proposed change to Contemporary Social Issues DL proposal
- Blair Browning presented a new DL Proposal: Communication and Media Literacy
- Brian Raines presented an alternative proposal to the Quantitative Reasoning DL entitled: Formal Reasoning

UPCOMING

April 20, April 25   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 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 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 members of our working groups—Deanne Kramer, Joyce Miller, Paul Martens, Wes Null, and Viola Osborn—who provided feedback to our executive members following their second straw vote. Associate Dean Carrolle Kamperman also provided extensive feedback on one of the common course proposals.

Executive members Sara Alexander, Mike Beaty, Blair Browning, Carson Mencken, Brian Raines, and Sara Stone are to be commended for their work on new and/or revised Distribution List proposals.

Blake Burleson