

Baccalaureate Core Reform

Faculty Senate | March 11, 2021

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Baccalaureate Core at Oregon State University

OSU's current Bacc Core was established in the 20th century, approximately 30 years ago. At the time, the curriculum was considered visionary. While there are still positive elements of our general education, it has limitations which are increasingly becoming barriers. As the profile of our student body has evolved and the university has expanded to offer full undergraduate degrees in Bend and through Ecampus, so has the demand to deliver a general education curriculum that meets the needs of our diverse learners. Reform of general education to engage the 21st century learner will lead to recruitment and retention of first year and transfer students.

Limitations of current OSU Bacc Core model:

- Students have a difficult time understanding the purpose and value of general education.
- OSU has largest Bacc Core out of all public institutions in the state in terms of categories, we also have nearly 1000 courses approved in the Bacc Core.
- Our current Bacc Core creates significant barriers for transfer students, leading to excess credits and student debt because it does not map well to transfer programs.
- Some Bacc Core categories have lost identity as learning outcomes overlap.
- Course development is strongly driven by budget concerns but should be driven by Bacc Core Learning goals. As a result, more courses are added each year without strategic planning and units are competing for enrollment.
- As courses are added to categories from all colleges, there are more incentives for students to take courses from their major which “double dip” with Bacc Core, so they are not gaining exposure to other subject matter or having an interdisciplinary educational experience.

Listening Sessions

In Fall 2019, Faculty Senate Executive Committee (FSEC) and Vice Provost of Undergraduate Education (Alix Gitelman) hosted listening sessions. Four sessions were held for faculty on the Corvallis campus and one listening session at the Cascades Campus. One session was hosted for students and a student survey was administered.

Faculty Perspective – Themes from Listening Sessions

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Purpose of the BC is poorly defined• Potential alignments with other university strategies are needed• Student choice overwhelmed by number of offerings | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Specific BC requirements are unclear, overlap• Transfer students, excessive credit requirements• Interactions of BC with other programs• Implications of the budget model• Include Sustainability and Social Justice |
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Student Perspective – Listening Sessions and Survey

Areas for improvement:

- Too many credits/requirements
- Too repetitive
- Some requirements covered in High School (i.e. HHS 231/241 or WR 121)
- “Busy work”
- Should cover more skills
- Request for more double counting (varied by major)

Positives:

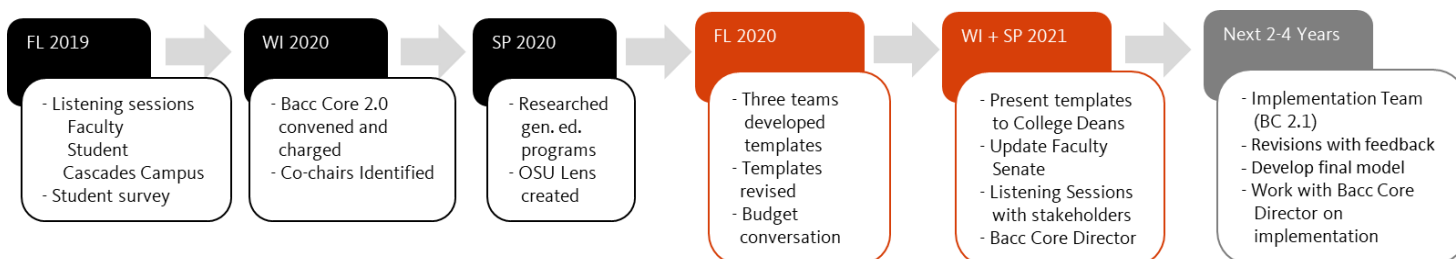
- Complimentary toward synthesis courses
- Opportunity to learn about other majors
- Opportunities to interact with students from across campus

Bacc Core 2.0 Revision Committee

Vice Provost of Undergraduate Education and FSEC charged and convened Bacc Core Revision Committee

Charge: Develop three templates of Bacc Core/General Education models

The revision committee was commissioned in Winter 2020 and met in Spring and Fall 2020. The sixteen-person committee was comprised of representatives from different campuses, modalities, functional administrative areas, all faculty ranks, and students. While solicited, not all colleges were represented. The Committee reviewed the Fall 2019 listening session comments and researched over 40 institutions nationally and internationally (including large R1, land grant, public, private), AACU general education models, and Oregon Transfer Compass in addition to the 2010 Baccalaureate Core Review Committee report.



Alternative Model Development

Following review and discussion of the pros and cons and applicability of general education requirements from other institutions, the Committee split into three groups to develop alternatives for a new Bacc Core at OSU. These templates were then reviewed through an “OSU lens” and modified to clarify their objectives and address a broad suite of criteria. Next steps include communication to stakeholders of progress to date with future opportunities for collaboration, feedback, revisions and continued communication.

Considerations for templates:

- Have fewer credits and categories than current model;
- Become more transfer friendly;
- Have alignment with learner goals, assessment and accreditation.

Elements for the OSU lens were identified using student data (location, modality, student type), Learning Goals for Graduates, OSU’s Land Grant Missions, transfer models, consideration of the budget, and themes from listening sessions and student survey.

Template 1: Wicked Problems

Total credits: 33-39 credits

About: Students will be presented with a Wicked Problem with a global focus, such as climate change, environmental degradation, poverty, or global pandemics. Each wicked problem must have both a sustainability and a social justice aspect that will be addressed in the class. Each problem will utilize science as one of the ways of understanding the cause of the problem and potential solutions. “Wicked problems” will hone students’ critical thinking and problem solving capabilities. It will be an upper division course which is non-transferable.

Template 2: Integrative & Applied Learning

Total credits: 38-46 credits

About: This template emphasizes essential learning to include foundational skills, breadth of perspective, and integrative & applied learning common to modern general education curriculum (see, e.g., LEAP). The vision culminates with a high-impact, capstone course, designed to engage students in deep and integrative learning. This course, along with a writing-intensive course, builds on fundamental skills and harnesses multidisciplinary perspectives to inform discipline-based projects. It will be an upper division course which is non-transferable.

Template 3: Informed Citizen

Total credits: 40-44 credits

About: The purpose of the Structural Inequities and Sustainability categories is to facilitate globalization, synthesize learning inside and outside the major, build on OSU's strengths as a land grant institution, add an OSU "stamp" to every student who earns a degree (even if they enroll with several "foundational knowledge" credits already completed), and create a cohort experience for OSU graduates. Model allows for potential to transfer courses within Informed Citizenship category.

Next Steps

- Update Faculty Senate of progress to date, present templates to stakeholders and solicit feedback.
- Create a website with a roadmap to communicate process and progress on Bacc Core curricular and policy revision.
- A new committee will be constituted by the FSEC to take data from the listening sessions and revise to a single model, develop learner outcomes, and explore implementation with the new Bacc Core Director.
- Continue to work with the Budget Office to evaluate and mitigate impacts of Bacc Core revision on colleges and faculty.

What we need from you:

- Focus on what we can do better for our students
- Creative ideas and open minds
- Collaboration
- Patience

Project Team: McKenzie Huber – Bacc Core Committee, Rorie Solberg – Bacc Core Committee, Heath Henry – Bacc Core Assessment; Erin Bird – Undergraduate Education; Rebeka Phelps – Ecampus; Ron Reuter – Cascades Campus; John Edwards, Kara Ritzheimer (v. Christopher Nichols) – Liberal Arts; Kate Lajtha – College of Agricultural Sciences; Lori McGraw – Public Health and Human Sciences; Bob Paasch – College of Engineering; Inara Scott – College of Business; Khawater Hussein and Safi Ahmad – Student Members; Mina Carson, Alix Gitelman, Selina Heppell and Dwaine Plaza – Ex-Officio