

## Baccalaureate Core Committee

### Annual Report 2013-2014

To: Faculty Senate Executive Committee  
From: Kevin Gable, Chair, Baccalaureate Core Committee  
Date: July 15, 2014  
Subj: Baccalaureate Core Committee Report, 2013-2014

**Membership:** Baccalaureate Core Committee (BCC) included representation from the College of Science (four members + chair), College of Liberal Arts (four members), College of Engineering (one member), College of Public Health & Human Sciences (one member). One member began the year in the College of Business and transitioned to CLA. There were seven tenure-track faculty, three fixed-term faculty, and one professional advisor.

There were formally 3 openings unfilled, and no student members were appointed by ASOSU.

Kevin Gable, Chair '16	Chemistry
McKenzie Pfeifer '14	School of Design and Human Environment
Jaga Giebultowicz '14	Zoology
Trischa Goodnow (v. Sherwood) '14	School of Arts & Communication
Rebecca Olson '14	English
Linda Bruslind '15	Microbiology
Lori Kayes '15	Biology
Melinda Manore '15	School of Biological & Population Health Sciences
Ken Winograd '15	College of Education
Kirsi Peltomaki '15	Art
Bob Paasch '16	Mechanical, Industrial & Manufacturing Engineering
Robert Brudvig '16	Music
Malgo Peszynska '16	Mathematics
TBA '16	

**Ex-Officios:**

WIC Director – Vicki Tolar Burton  
DPD Director – Nana Osei-Kofi  
Academic Affairs – Stefani Dawn

**Student Members:**

- TBA
- TBA

*Executive Committee Liaison – Bernadine Strik*

**Meetings:** Because of challenges in selecting leadership, meetings did not commence until late Fall term. Meetings were convened every other week during Winter term, and weekly during Spring term. Use of the committee email list allowed business to be conducted between meetings, but that was limited to items which had already had face-to-face discussion.

Minutes of our meetings are posted under “Meeting History” on the [BCC Website](#).

Two sessions were held in early Winter term to provide training for Category Review tools and data for members of the committee. No minutes were recorded for those sessions.

**Committee Actions: Course Approvals**

The committee considered a total of 70 Category II proposals. This total included new courses, a significant number of changes to course credit hours and several others involving other course changes. The Committee actions on approvals are summarized by category

below in Table I.

Category	New Approvals	Course Changes	Notes
<b>Skills:</b>			
Mathematics		MTH 111, MTH 112, MTH 211, MTH 241, MTH 245, MTH 251	
Fitness		HHS231	
Writing II	WR 303		
Physical Science	SOIL 206, WSE210	OC 201, SOIL 102, SOIL 205	
Biological Science		SOIL 102	
<b>Perspectives:</b>			
Cultural Diversity	ART 310, HST 353	ES 241	
Literature & The Arts	ART 310, ART 311, ART 364, ART 365, IT 261, WGSS 295		
Western Culture	AREC 240, FR 429, GER 241, HST 338, IT331, PHL 206		
DPD	HST 365, PHL 345	ES 334, ES 351, ES 353, ES 355, ES 4/553, WGSS 414, WGSS 4/595	
<b>Synthesis:</b>			
Science, Technology & Society	FES 4/535, WSE 392		
Contemporary Global Issues	ANTH 374, ANTH 4/566, ECON 352, QS 4/576		
WIC	ANTH 370, BI 315, ECE 441, ECE 442, ES 350, IE 497, IE 498		

### **Committee actions: Category Review**

The Committee reviewed three Skills categories (Mathematics, Speech and Fitness), including a total of 16 courses. It also reviewed the WIC courses (23) in the Colleges of Agricultural Sciences, Business, and Health and Human Sciences. Of the 39 courses reviewed all, save one, were either approved or provisionally approved (anticipating re-review in 2014-2015, after implementation of recommendations by the unit). A list of actions taken are provided in [Table II](#), and letters shared with units are compiled in Appendix I.

General issues were observed across categories:

1. Variance among syllabi in different sections represented a clear challenge to the process, because of the confusion it creates for the Committee in understanding how each section, and the course as a whole, meets the Category Student Learning Outcomes (CSLOs). We recognize that each instructor may reach an outcome in a distinct manner, and it is not our intent that all sections must either work from an identical syllabus or that instructional strategies must be identical. However, we have asked that units examine the variance among syllabi and coordinate, to the extent possible, several items:
  - Adherence to [University guidelines for syllabi](#)
  - Statement that the course meets a specific requirement in the Baccalaureate Core
  - Verbatim reproduction of the [Category Student Learning Outcomes](#)
  - Provision of a connection between course activity described in the syllabus, and how those activities serve to lead students to meet the CSLOs.
2. While not as prevalent as variation in syllabi, section-to-section variation in outcome was observed in some cases. This includes both grade distribution and the results from assessment of teaching (where the rubric allowed that to be determined). We flagged those for unit consideration as part of their assessment regime.
3. Most reviews included information about both the instructors' and the unit's assessment regime. There remains apparent confusion over the distinction between evaluation of an individual student (achievement or performance used to determine a grade) and the question of how a section or a course is collectively meeting the CSLOs (and other SLOs defined for the course).

WIC courses exhibited many of these issues; several specific concerns were common.

1. In rare cases, there was insufficient documentation to establish clearly that the course met the quantitative and qualitative metrics for writing. Minimum lengths for writing assignments (pages or words are both acceptable) need to be specified. The best syllabi specified due dates for drafts and for revised writing assignments, along with designation of when both formal and informal writing would be done.
2. In several cases, it was not clear that revision of the 2000-word writing assignment was a mandatory exercise, as specified in the WIC guidelines.
3. In several cases, it was not clear who performed the review of the initial draft prior to revision. This should be the instructor; it is unacceptable to use peer review as a substitute (though certainly peer review can play a productive additional role, if desired).
4. Several courses had section sizes that exceeded (some significantly) the recommended 20-25 student per section limit. This issue is critical to ensure the ability of the instructor to provide the attention necessary to read, review and provide substantive feedback to help students develop their writing process.

## **Other policy issues**

1. *Credit hour changes.* The Committee is observing a substantial number of proposals that involve only an increase in the number of credit hours. There are several issues that intersect; historically, the Committee has not felt it needs to take a review position on the content and structure of a course in that our primary concern is over whether and how a course meets the BCC student learning outcomes. The review by the Curriculum Council is a better location for the question of whether changing credit for an individual course is justified by the proposal.

However, our observation is that the number of courses seeking this change, coupled with evolution of BCC courses over time, places at severe risk the ability of a student to complete the BCC in a timely fashion, particularly in programs with heavy credit hour requirements. We discussed the issue with the Advising Council, the Curriculum Council, and with administrators in several of the most highly affected colleges. There is universal concern, but few concrete suggestions about how to fashion a policy to move forward. Several factors play in:

- The current description of the Bacc Core is that it is composed of 51 credit-hours (out of 180 required). This is based on minimum credits for each requirement. To the extent that the only courses available to some students are above the minimum, this creates a dishonest characterization of the Bacc Core.

- The elimination of the tuition plateau means that adding extra hours to these requirements creates an unfair financial burden for students.

- Many programs have very high credit loads for required courses—some very close to 130 hours. This makes it extremely difficult for students to consistently schedule appropriate total credit loads when courses exceed credit hour expectations.

- Other programs have more minimal requirements, and are seeking courses that provide more depth.

- In an ideal world, faculty should design the course that needs to be taught, and assign credit based on the amount of work needed to achieve the desired course learning outcomes.

The following data represent the state of course availability in several of the Bacc Core categories for 2012-2013:

	Number of Credits				Total
	Count of 3 Credit	% of Category	Count of 4 Credit	% of Category	
<b>Contemporary Global Issues</b>	Courses: 24	56%	Courses: 19	44%	43
	Lower: 0 Upper: 24	Lower: 0% Upper: 100%	Lower: 0 Upper: 19	Lower: 0% Upper: 100%	43
	Students: 5543	79%	Students: 1480	21%	7023
<b>Cultural Diversity</b>	Courses: 35	71%	Courses: 14	25%	49
	Lower: 21 Upper: 14	Lower: 60% Upper: 40%	Lower: 4 Upper: 10	Lower: 29% Upper: 71%	49
	Students: 5948	83%	Students: 1152	16%	7100
<b>Difference, Power, &amp; Discrimination</b>	25	53%	21	45%	47
	Lower: 12 Upper: 13	Lower: 48% Upper: 52%	Lower: 10 Upper: 11	Lower: 48% Upper: 52%	47
	Students: 510	57%	Students: 4219	43%	
<b>Literature &amp; Arts</b>	21	43%	28	57%	49
	Lower: 18 Upper: 3	Lower: 86% Upper: 14%	Lower: 20 Upper: 8	Lower: 71% Upper: 29%	49
	Students: 5658	68%	Students: 2653	32%	8311
<b>Science, Technology &amp; Society</b>	61	73%	22	27%	83
	Lower: 0 Upper: 61	Lower: 0% Upper: 100%	Lower: 0 Upper: 22	Lower: 0% Upper: 100%	83
	Students: 7463	85%	Students: 1357	15%	8820
<b>Social Processes &amp; Institutions</b>	15	63%	9	38%	24
	Lower: 14 Upper: 1	Lower: 93% Upper: 7%	Lower: 9 Upper: 0	Lower: 100% Upper: 0	24
	Students: 12654	62%	Students: 7709	38%	20,363
<b>Western Culture</b>	27	43%	36	57%	63
	Lower: 15 Upper: 12	Lower: 56% Upper: 44%	Lower: 29 Upper: 7	Lower: 81% Upper: 19%	63
	Students: 3694	34%	Students: 7194	66%	10888

The committee discussed, but ultimately postponed, action on several ideas for policies:

- A. Refuse to approve credit-hour changes for any category with >50% of course listings above the minimum. This would be the simplest to administer. However, it would be unfair to new faculty designing courses primarily in one of several categories. However, existing courses would be grandfathered.
- B. Refuse to approve credit-hour changes for any category with >50% of available seats (or actual registration) are in courses above the minimum. This would need to be determined on a term-by-term basis, and while it would use a better measure of actual student choice, it would be

extremely difficult to administer. The sense is that this is unworkable.

C. Choose another basis for recommendation. One example might be to allow upper division courses more latitude than lower division courses.

In the end, the committee decided to approve courses that had reached it for review by May 1 (and for which there were no other issues), but to notify proposers that we would be developing new policy in 2014-15.

2. *Student Learning Outcomes for the Skills—Speech category.* We observed that one course in this category had no requirement for public speaking. Given the importance of oral communication to both future learning and professional life after the degree, we asked the unit delivering the courses in this category to draft a revision of the SLOs for the category that would explicitly require speaking. An initial draft has been returned, but has not been discussed in committee.

3. *Leadership and committee operation.* This committee is in need of better leadership. It is critical to reestablish a co-chair structure; this can allow one co-chair to manage new course proposals; the other could then run category reviews and manage additional issues. The workload is simply too heavy for a single chair to manage effectively.

The committee needs to start early in the academic year. There should be an initial half-day retreat prior to the start of classes (this year, the week of Sept. 15-19 would be ideal) to get new members up to speed on the framework of what the committee does and the issues we face. Then we need to do training for category review and mesh that with new member training on proposal review. That sets us up to be highly productive in the late fall-winter term time frame when the bulk of the work hits.

Further, the chairs should initially schedule weekly meetings (90 min.) each term. The committee is large enough that it is unlikely to find a mutually compatible time slot, so a rotating alternation of slots can work well. In many cases, follow-up on resubmitted proposals needing minor correction is most efficiently handled by email, though this risks failing to fully vet a given proposal. Others do need full committee discussion when the issues are significant.

The Committee needs to be more conscious of how it keeps records. Minutes should not identify speakers, but they do need to better capture and display the final committee decisions.