

## Baccalaureate Core Committee

### Annual Report 2020-2021

The Faculty Senate Baccalaureate Core Committee has three primary functions: 1) to conduct periodic reviews of existing baccalaureate core courses continued alignment with approved category learning outcomes and relevance of assessment methods; 2) to review curricular proposals for changes to existing bacc core courses, additions of existing courses to the bacc core, or proposal of new courses for inclusion in the bacc core; and 3) develop and approve strategy and planning for the baccalaureate core. In recognition of these three functions, the Committee operated with three co-chairs in AY 20-21, with each co-chair leading the committee's efforts in one of these three areas as members of a leadership team. Activities are reported here in each of these three areas but begin by first discussing committee membership.

#### **Committee Membership**

The Committee began AY 2020-21 without a fully populated committee membership. The co-chairs recruited a representative from Engineering, in an effort to fulfill the Standing Rules of the Committee which calls for, so far as is practical, at least one representative from each college granting stand-alone undergraduate degrees. Another slot on the Committee remained unfilled until spring quarter, when a fourth representative from the College of Liberal Arts was appointed to the Committee. The Committee recommends that each annual cycle begins with a fully populated committee, and that selection of committee membership be considered more strategically by the Executive Committee to ensure all stake holding academic units are effectively represented on the committee. In particular, populating the committee with individuals whose positions within their colleges/campuses enable them to serve as effective conduits for the two-way flow of information between the Committee and the colleges/campuses they represent could pay dividends towards effective functioning of the Committee, faculty engagement with the bacc core in general, and is within the spirit of OSU's culture of shared governance.

Kathy Becker-Blease, Co-Chair '21	Psychological Sciences
Kaplan Yalcin, Co-Chair '21	College of Earth, Ocean, & Atmospheric Sciences
McKenzie Huber, Co-Chair '22	College of Forestry
Rene Reitsma '21	College of Business
David Roundy '21	Physics
Rorie Spill Solberg '21	Political Science
Heather Arbuckle '22	College of Science
Aidas Banaitis '22	OSU-Cascades, College of Science
Daniel Faltsek (v. Barber) '22	New Media Communications
Matthew Kennedy '22	Animal and Rangeland Sciences
Kelsey Emard '23	College of Earth, Ocean, & Atmospheric Sciences
Jack Istok '23	Civil & Construction Engineering
Lori McGraw '23	Human Development & Family Sciences
Justin St. Germain '23	Writing, Literature & Film

#### Student Members:

- Andrew Harker
- TBA

#### Ex-Officio Members:

- Difference, Power & Discrimination – Bradley Boovy
- Ecampus – Karen Watte
- Office of Undergraduate Education – Heath Henry
- Writing Intensive Curriculum – Sarah Perrault

*Executive Committee Liaison – Dwaine Plaza*

### ***Category Review of Dual-listed Courses***

The BCC conducts periodic review of all actively taught bacc core courses in a given category on a ten-year cycle. This process supports OSU assessment and accreditation by providing a systematic review of student attainment of general education requirements. However, over the years it had become apparent that organization of reviews by category failed to adequately or holistically review and assess those courses listed for more than one category. Further, dual-listed courses were observed to frequently fall short in delivering each of the three learning outcomes in the two (or three) categories in which the course was listed. In the 2019/20 academic year the Committee brought forth a proposal to Faculty Senate to address concerns around dual-listed courses. The outcome of the Faculty Senate debate on this question was a review of all dual-listed courses in the 2020/21 academic cycle.

Academic units were invited to either submit review materials for dual-listed courses or opt out of review by choosing to retain a single category for each course. Of the 79 courses listed in more than one category, 66 opted out of the review by choosing a single category for the course to remain in and focus on in its delivery of the learning outcomes. The remaining 13 courses submitted review materials. Each dual-listed course was assigned two lead reviewers from different disciplines, who presented their findings for discussion by committee. From these discussions motions emerged to recertify one course in both categories, recertify nine courses in one category, and decertify three courses from both categories. Motions were approved by a vote of the Committee. The use of Zoom for Committee meetings facilitated implementation of an anonymous voting system to eliminate consensus bias (which was also used in all other matters requiring a vote of the Committee, such as review of CIM proposals). Nonetheless, the results of Committee votes indicated broad consensus on the motions considered. Two of the courses that were decertified in both categories resubmitted through CIM revised course materials for inclusion in a single category, and were subsequently approved in that category.

The Committee recognizes that is disruptive for both students and faculty for courses to come out of and back into the bacc core on short timescales – a stable menu of bacc core courses is a more preferable outcome. Further, dual-listed courses are problematic for assessment purposes as there is no established pathway to determine how students use dual-listed courses in fulfilling degree requirements. Related to potential Baccalaureate Core Reform, the Committee recommends that units think very carefully about the purpose and student audience for their bacc core offerings, and that Bacc Core 2.0 carefully consider the curricular niche of each course category as one measure of its relevance and whether it is appropriate for courses to span multiple categories. Ultimately, if categories are not carefully delineated, overlap occurs which serves to undermine whatever curricular reason may have existed for separate categories in the first place.

### ***Review of Bacc Core New/Change Course Proposals***

A significant function of the Committee in service to the campus community is review of CIM curricular proposals for bacc core courses, including changes to existing bacc core courses, proposals to add existing courses to the bacc core, and proposals for new courses to be included in the bacc core. In AY 2020-21 the committee reviewed 24 new course proposals in CIM (approving 21) and 29 change course proposals (approving 23). The primary review criteria used by the Committee is syllabus-visible alignment of bacc core category learning outcomes (CLOs) with course content and assessment methods. Does the syllabus (and supporting information in CIM) articulate conceptual connections between CLOs and course content? Are the assessments and other graded activities in the course likely to provide meaningful feedback on student achievement of the CLOs? A matrix provided on the bacc core webpage serves as a template for use in proposals, and the Office of Academic Programs and Assessment (APA) is available for consultation on bacc core course proposals.

Nonetheless, the quality of CIM proposals varied widely in their ability to articulate a connection between the course and the criteria and rationale for inclusion in a bacc core category, both between and within academic units. Additionally, there is evidence that some

course proposals reach the committee without first being adequately vetted within the academic unit from which the proposal originated, and some academic units appear to have divested their faculty completely from direct involvement in the curricular proposal, review and approval process. The results can be frustrating for both the Committee and for the proposers in that poorly vetted proposals can result in curricular review committees such as the Baccalaureate Core Committee being put in the difficult position of arbitrating course proposals, while proposals whose supporting materials and responses to comments and requests for revisions are not prepared directly by the content expert (the faculty who are teaching or will teach the course) tend not to move through CIM efficiently and experience multiple rollbacks. In some cases, the Committee had to roll back course proposals for issues that should have been identified much earlier in the CIM workflow, such as syllabus minimum requirements, demonstration of alignment with the credits/contact hour policy or inclusion of a complete syllabus specific to each campus/modality being sought (e.g., Corvallis, OSU-Cascades, Ecampus, hybrid, etc.). In contrast, CIM proposals for which there is adequate support for proposal preparation and earlier vetting for their appropriateness in a given bacc core category, tend to move through CIM towards approval more expediently. Although the ultimate rate of proposal approval is high, proposals are often rolled back one or more times for revisions, and many of those rollbacks could be avoided with stronger initial proposals that meet all relevant requirements. The somewhat lower success rate for change relative to new course proposals reflects that some change course proposals are to add existing courses already part of a major program to the bacc core without adequate redesign to meet the needs of students who would take the course for bacc core and not as a major requirement or elective. In contrast, new course proposals that were designed for bacc core from the ground up, not surprisingly, have a higher approval rate for bacc core.

Based on these experiences, the Committee has a number of recommendations with respect to CIM course proposals:

- 1) Colleges/campuses strengthen the effectiveness of their curriculum committees in prescreening curricular changes before submission in CIM and providing proposal submission support to faculty while maintaining a lead role for preparation of proposals and supporting materials by course content experts (teaching faculty).
- 2) APA continues to provide effective screening of CIM proposals early in workflow, including syllabus minimum requirements, unique supporting syllabi for each campus/modality proposed, and demonstrated alignment with credit/contact hour policies appropriate to each schedule type being sought.
- 3) Directors (WIC, DPD, and now Bacc Core) provide training opportunities to faculty teaching in these areas emphasizing alignment of Course Learning Outcomes (CLOs) with course content and assessment methods.

### ***Strategy and Planning for the Baccalaureate Core***

Commitment to shared governance is an institutional value at OSU. Ultimately, the Baccalaureate Core Committee is a service committee. However, the responsibilities of the Committee are time-consuming for its members, yet all committee members who have served in recent years have demonstrated a deep commitment to the effectiveness of the bacc core and the student experience in bacc core courses. The FTE provided by a long-sought Director of the Baccalaureate Core will help alleviate the administrative burden on committee members fulfilling a service commitment and is a most welcome development.

The Committee has in recent years undertaken efforts to further development, standardize, and document Committee processes and improve communication with academic units. More strategic populating of the Committee would help in this regard. The Committee worked with colleges to identify unit designees, typically Assistant or Associate Deans, to funnel communication regarding category review submissions and recertification/decertification decisions. Unit designees are then responsible for disseminating category review information to relevant faculty and other stakeholders in their units. The Committee has also standardized and documented timelines for category reviews, which are provided to unit designees for further dissemination with requests for review materials.

The Committee has been greatly assisted in fulfilling its responsibilities by campus partners including APA, Ecampus, and the DPD and WIC Directors. Nonetheless, the Committee has recommendations for process improvement:

- 1) The expedited proposal process that bypasses the Committee when a new campus or modality (e.g., OSU-Cascades, Ecampus) is proposed for an existing bacc core course remains problematic. These problems come to forefront when such courses come up for periodic category review and the campuses/modalities differ greatly in the extent to which they demonstrate continued alignment with CLOs, criteria and rationale. Yet the Committee can only make blanket recertify/decertify decisions by course, which then apply to all campuses and modalities in which the course is taught. The Committee continues to recommend that proposals to add a campus/modality to an existing bacc core course include a fully developed syllabus for that campus/modality which is reviewed by the Committee. This would improve the student experience and lead to more positive outcomes in category reviews for such courses by requiring, before a course is approved for that modality, that the proposer be able to demonstrate continued alignment of CLOs with course content and assessment methods.
- 2) As Bacc Core 2.0 takes shape, the relationship between WIC and bacc core should be reconsidered. Currently, WIC is housed within bacc core by Faculty Senate yet WIC is, at its heart, a disciplinary (major) writing requirement. It may make administrative sense and improve efficiencies for WIC to be removed from bacc core and remain as a stand-alone program/major requirement, without WIC course proposals being reviewed again by the Committee.