

Proposal for Revision to the OSU Baccalaureate Core

February 11, 2010

Executive Summary

The Baccalaureate Core *ad hoc* Review Committee was charged by the Executive Committee of the Faculty Senate to "*improve the educational attainment and retention of undergraduate students at Oregon State University*" by reviewing and recommending revisions to the Baccalaureate Core (Bacc Core). We completed a Phase I assessment report in 2009 (available on the Faculty Senate website) in which we concluded that our Bacc Core is sound in its conception and current structure, but that implementation (our current low-cost option) has drifted with time and created some issues that need to be addressed.

In this **Phase II** effort, we will work with the campus as a whole to revise several key aspects of Bacc Core implementation, including: 1) changes to the campus culture surrounding the Bacc Core and its implementation, and 2) strategic curricular and administrative enhancements and adjustments. In this way, we hope to promote student success, consistent with OSU's Strategic Plan, and guide the evolution of the Bacc Core over the coming years. Following a comment period ending April 9, 2010, the proposal will be refined and then presented at the May 2010 meeting of the Faculty Senate. Community comment will be solicited through campus forums. Individual comments can be offered via <http://oregonstate.edu/senate/>.

The attached elements under development and slated for review can be summarized as follows:

1. **Comprehensive Learning Goals:** Creating a clear unified vision for our undergraduates and faculty
 - Encompass the Baccalaureate Core and Major degree programs
 - Articulated/visual representations of horizontal and vertical integration of student learning
 - Map curriculum requirements in both the Bacc Core and Major(s) to Learning Goals
2. **Transforming the Culture:** Sustaining and improving program value and promoting engagement
 - Continuous communication of our shared vision (e.g., the Learning Goals) to the campus
 - catalog-visible narratives/figures and a modern web presence
 - Coordinated faculty/advisor development and support for curriculum development.
 - Multiple direct and indirect assessment strategies with feedback loops.
3. **First-Year Linkages:** Integrating the Bacc Core with all campus efforts to improve first-year student success
 - Foundational Skills Requirement: Reading/Writing, Mathematics, Oral Communication, and Fitness
 - Administrative commitment to course access and appropriate class sizes
 - First-year Learning Community pilot programs
4. **Experiential Learning:** Using diverse means to achieve learning goals and essential outcomes
 - Allow approved service/hands-on/international experiences to satisfy Bacc Core requirements
 - Existing and new courses and opportunities, with appropriate oversight and assessment
 - New "EL" prefix/suffix options
5. **Organizational Structure:** Fostering shared governance for broad program implementation and success
 - An expanded charge to the Faculty Senate Baccalaureate Core Committee to focus on:
 - Learning Goals, larger structural and implementation issues, and curricular strategies
 - A revised administrative structure in Academic Affairs consisting of:
 - A full-time permanent Baccalaureate Core Director as a partner with Faculty Senate
 - Ongoing involvement of OSU faculty members in fixed-term, partial FTE appointments

Background information, rationale and some specifics are outlined for each of these proposals in the following pages, but there is a more general need to consider these potential changes even without all the details. Indeed, many include recommendations for more work on their development and/or linkages to other elements in progress. We look forward to receiving your feedback.

Introduction

The elements presented in this proposal have been developed in response to this committee's Phase I study,¹ which polled the campus community through focus groups, open forums, and a student survey that had over 2,300 respondents. This proposal addresses the most serious concerns identified with the implementation of the Baccalaureate Core (Bacc Core) curriculum, including a perceived lack of coherence among the courses leading to a "checkbox effect", a lack of discourse in our community about the goals and philosophy of general education, and a perceived lack of even fundamental competency in the basic skills. Because a significant proportion of the undergraduate curriculum is allocated to general education and many of the courses are taken early in the student experience, the Bacc Core is the most powerful lever available to enhance retention and graduation rates at OSU.

In developing the proposal elements, we considered the following fundamental design questions:

1. How can we best energize a 'community of learning' that values general education?
2. How can we more effectively develop and maintain a progression into and through the Bacc Core? What is the role of the first-year experience in this process?
3. How can we establish more meaningful connections and balance between the Bacc Core and majors?
4. How can we foster connections among diverse fields of thought in order to make the Bacc Core more rich and meaningful, more welcome among students, and easier for faculty and advisors to convey and implement?
5. How can we create opportunities for integrative learning within classes (e.g., via team teaching and/or multi-disciplinary instruction)? Faculty members do their best thinking and best teaching while in meaningful relationship with students and colleagues.
6. Who will do the teaching and how will those teachers be prepared and supported for delivering the Bacc Core? How will that vary between lower- and upper-division requirements? How will faculty be rewarded for such teaching? What will be the role of eCampus?
7. What are the logistics for implementing and monitoring experiential learning (e.g., service learning, undergraduate research and study abroad)?

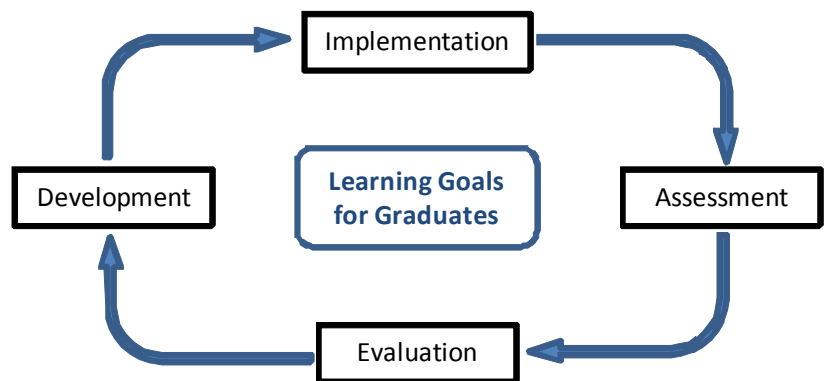


Figure 1. Continuous improvement cycle for the Baccalaureate Core

This proposal contains five elements designed to address the issues and questions described above. The intent is to catalyze a transformation of the Bacc Core through a dynamic and responsive system (much like a living organism) that is robust and sustainable. As opposed to immediate structural changes, a philosophy of continuous improvement through development, implementation, assessment and evaluation is envisioned, as shown in Figure 1. The following pages describe the five elements proposed: Element 1, Adoption of a set of **Comprehensive Learning Goals for Graduates** encompassing both the major and Bacc Core to provide a lens through which curriculum is developed, assessed and evaluated; Element 2, **Transforming the Campus Culture** to intentionally engage student, advisor and faculty participation in an integrated and valued general education experience over time; Element 3, **First-Year Linkages**, and Element 4, **Student Engagement with Experiential Learning**, represent the first two initiatives in a cycle of continuous improvement; and Element 5, **Organization Structure**, assigns specific responsibility for effectiveness of the Bacc Core through a structure of shared governance between the Faculty Senate and the university administration.

¹ Baccalaureate Core *ad hoc* Review Committee - Phase I Summary Report (available on the Faculty Senate website)

Element 1: Comprehensive Learning Goals

Background and Rationale:

Learning outcomes for students' majors and their general education historically have been separated. We suggest that this tends to result in a conceptual disconnection between the major and the Bacc Core, thereby weakening both curricular experiences for students. By integrating both curricular systems through a common set of outcomes, we anticipate that faculty and students will more readily embrace interdisciplinary projects and thinking and that the systems will provide conceptual support for each other in a more reciprocal relationship.

Educational theorists and researchers have long understood the quintessential importance of learning goals in the shaping of curriculum and teaching.² The primacy of learning goals is germane to all learning organizations, from the elementary school to higher education and on to the world of work. The learning goals proposal that follows reflects our commitment to an undergraduate learning experience and culture that is both of social worth as well as worthy of a great institution of higher learning.

The following outcomes have been adapted from the "Learning Goals for Graduates" (LGGs) developed originally within the OSU 2007 strategic planning process (2002-2007) and revisited in 2006 by the University Assessment Council. The group that developed these goals during fall 2005, the Learning Goals Task Force, was a subgroup of the University Assessment Council. Task force members included the following: Leslie Burns (facilitator), Susie Leslie, Bob Mason, Mina McDaniel, Ron Reuter, Larry Roper, Rebecca Sanderson, Gina Shellhammer, Janine Trempy, Juan Trujillo; Vickie Nunnemaker (staff). The work of the Learning Goals Task Force was a response to the absence of any university-wide learning goals for graduates. This group developed **seven core learning goals** at its fall 2005 retreat, but this taxonomy of outcomes has not yet been institutionalized or operationalized.

The Baccalaureate Core *ad hoc* Review Committee believes that implementation of the LGGs is a necessary step to transform the learning culture of the university for students, staff and faculty. Reflecting our charge by the Faculty Senate, the committee believes that *student engagement* and *retention* will be significantly improved with the effective implementation of these outcomes. Finally, adoption of the Learning Goals addresses an accreditation imperative for OSU. Revised accreditation standards of the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities require institutions to identify "*core themes within institutional mission.*" Goal 2 in the OSU Strategic Plan envisions that we will: "Provide an excellent teaching and learning environment and achieve student access, persistence and success through graduation". The Learning Goals, if approved by the Faculty Senate, articulate a viable core theme in support of this goal.

The proposal:

The Baccalaureate Core *ad hoc* Review Committee recommends that learning outcomes for graduates become institutionalized and operationalized. The proposed outcomes listed below are a slight modification of the 2005 Learning Goals for Graduates, as follows:

Learning Goals for Graduates (LGGs) of Oregon State University

1. Competency and Knowledge in Multiple Fields - As an OSU graduate, you will show a depth of knowledge in one or more majors as it relates to its history, problems, strategic thinking processes and ways of knowing, and vocabulary. You will also show a breadth of knowledge across the disciplines, which include the humanities and arts, science, social science and mathematics, from both technical and critical orientations.

² Eisner, E. 1985. *The educational imagination: On the design and evaluation of school programs*. New York: MacMillan.

2. Critical Thinking - As an OSU graduate, you will evaluate and synthesize information from multiple sources and perspectives to make informed decisions and solve problems; you will exhibit intellectual curiosity, including the disposition and ability to engage in evidence-based reasoning and critical thinking.
3. Pluralism and Cultural Legacies - As an OSU graduate, you will acquire knowledge and appreciation of the diversity of human cultural, historical and social experiences, and be able to reflect on how your individual life experience relates to the complex nature of human conditions in other places and times.
4. Collaboration - As an OSU graduate, you will develop the ability to be a positive contributor to situations requiring shared responsibility toward achieving a common goal.
5. Social Responsibility and Sustainability - As an OSU graduate, you will develop the capacity to construct an engaged, contributing life, and to engage in actions that reflect an understanding of the values of service, citizenship, social responsibility and the interdependent nature of local and global communities.
6. Communication - As an OSU graduate, you will be able to present and evaluate information, as well as to devise and exchange ideas clearly and effectively so that you can communicate with diverse audiences in a variety of situations.
7. Self-Awareness and Life-Long Learning - As an OSU graduate, you will develop awareness of and appreciation for your personal strengths, values, and challenges, and you will cultivate the ability to use that knowledge to guide your future learning and development.

Implications:

1. The Baccalaureate Review Core Review Committee recommends that the Faculty Senate adopt these goals as an overarching framework for ongoing curriculum development and assessment of student learning. It is intended that these LGGs will play an integral role in shaping curriculum development and university-wide assessments. We recommend that the Curriculum Council take on at least two new roles, two of which are enumerated below; the third is addressed under Implication #3.
 - *The Curriculum Council shall undertake periodic review of the LGGs, propose changes as necessary, and seek regular re-affirmation of the LGGs from the Faculty Senate every other year.*
 - *In concert with the Office of Academic Affairs, including the Baccalaureate Core Administrator (see Element 5 below), the Curriculum Council shall incorporate assessment of student accomplishment of LGGs in periodic review of undergraduate programs.*
2. Each major program will explicitly identify and demonstrate the manner in which the discipline-specific curriculum allows its students to achieve the LGGs. The Baccalaureate Core, as a whole, will include all LGGs. Each category description will identify those specific LGGs that it addresses. Any course approved for a category will need to identify in a specified way how students achieve those category specific LGGs. How LGGs are addressed and contained in other (non Bacc Core) course syllabi will be decided by faculty at the program level.
3. The LGGs will reflect both the formal and informal educational experience of all undergraduates. Implications #1 and #2 address the formal curriculum. The informal curriculum consists of co-curricular activities, such as those sponsored by housing and residence halls, clubs, athletic programs and ad hoc service opportunities. University personnel and advisors whose work is in this informal educational system will support student's accomplishment of the LGGs. The Curriculum Council will work with the Office of Academic Affairs and the Student Affairs Team to coordinate this work.

Element 2: Transforming the Campus Culture

Background and Rationale:

The current mission statement for the Bacc Core states:³

The Baccalaureate Core (Bacc Core) Curriculum is intended to represent what the OSU faculty believes is the foundation for students' further understanding of the modern world. Informed by natural and social sciences, arts, and humanities, the Bacc Core requires students to think critically and creatively, and to synthesize ideas and information when evaluating major societal issues. Importantly, the Bacc Core promotes understanding of interrelationships among disciplines in order to increase students' capacities as ethical citizens of an ever-changing world.

The Baccalaureate Core *ad hoc* Review Committee's Phase I assessment in 2009 showed a campus-wide consensus that the philosophy and goals of the Bacc Core are sound and consistent with the AAC&U's Liberal Education for America's Promise (LEAP) project,⁴ which contains a distilled list of Essential Learning Outcomes associated with a standard four-year university education. While there was general positive consensus on a philosophical level, the Phase I study also revealed that to a large extent faculty, advisors and students perceived the Bacc Core in practice as a discrete and seemingly unrelated set of classes, presented as random choices on a checklist. In order to better align practice with intent, a fundamental transformation needs to occur across the campus.

A general apathy towards the goals and purpose of general education is a fundamental barrier to engagement. Without instilling meaning and value to the Bacc Core as a whole, any curricular reforms will have limited impact. As a remedy, we propose a deliberate effort to communicate to the role of general education in learning and encourage discourse amongst the community. Additionally, to provide context in practice, a more coherent curriculum is needed where students are better able to make connections and integrate their knowledge. Such coherence needs to be deliberately designed into the undergraduate experience, with explicit activities that encourage vertical and horizontal integration throughout the curriculum. Finally, we need a method to monitor and assess what is being done, compare that to the intent, and make decisions about those components that are working well and those components that need change. Such a process includes articulating learning outcomes, collecting data, and interpreting results to make informed curricular decisions.

The proposal:

The Baccalaureate Core *ad hoc* Review Committee recommends three general components to activate this transformation: (1) advocacy of a shared vision and value of the general education component; (2) active development of explicit activities that enhance vertical and horizontal integration, and (3) continuous improvement through a methodical and transformative assessment and evaluation process.

Specific components include:

- Communicate a common, shared vision of the Bacc Core as a central component of institutional identity and the student experience to all constituencies (e.g., students, faculty, and advisors), including: articulated/visual representations of horizontal and vertical integration, catalog-visible narratives, and a direct and modern web presence.

³ Description of the Baccalaureate Core, adopted by the Baccalaureate Core Committee. February 14, 2007

⁴ <http://www.aacu.org/leap/vision.cfm> (accessed 02/02/2010)

- Provide development opportunities for faculty and advisors that encompass the Bacc Core on a programmatic level, including orientation to Bacc Core philosophy, pedagogy, structure, and its relationship to OSU's Learning Goals.
- Establish the "Baccalaureate Core Instructional Faculty", consisting of OSU faculty members who have completed orientation and development specific to the Bacc Core; members should be listed in the General Catalog.
- Greater horizontal and vertical integration of the Bacc Core Curriculum. Embed activities that prompt students to "reflect forward" at the beginning of their university experience and "reflect back" towards the end.
- Expand opportunities to develop pedagogical expertise and innovations that promote student achievement of learning goals, such as active and collaborative learning activities, in the various general education contexts.
- Development and implementation of transformative assessment and evaluation strategies to insure quality and rigor. Incorporate assessment processes into review of Bacc Core courses, categories, and learning goals.

Implications:

1. Currently all elements of development, implementation, assessment and evaluation related to the Bacc Core are overseen by a Faculty Senate committee. It is unrealistic to think that a coherent and explicit message can be delivered by faculty as one component of their service activity. There needs to be an administrative facet that is responsible for the specific items above and to advocate for the Bacc Core, in general. The organizational structure is addressed in Element 5 of this proposal.
2. Strategies need to be developed in collaboration with faculty, advisors, and departments for promotion of the Bacc Cores vision, for development of explicit activities that lead to horizontal and vertical integration, and for assessment and evaluation. There will need to be buy-in and participation from the diverse constituencies that interact with the Bacc Core.

Element 3: First-Year Linkages

Background and Rationale:

The first, focused curricular initiative forms a richer, more coherent student experience through establishing first-year linkages. A quality first-year experience provides the foundation for the entire educational experience outlined in the comprehensive Learning Goals for Graduates of OSU (see Element 1). In last year's Phase I review process, the university community highly valued general education in basic academic skill areas – mathematics, reading, and oral and written communication – as well as in life skills in health and wellness. The community also valued opportunities for active and collaborative learning as important components of the first-year experience. Together these experiences should form the first stage of an extensive educational process in which students will practice skills and apply knowledge in different contexts throughout their undergraduate careers. By gaining early practice and guidance in foundational skills and knowledge, OSU students will be better-equipped to achieve high standards for performance and to formulate solutions to challenging problems and projects in subsequent years of study as well as throughout their lives.

Writing is currently strongly recommended in the first year, yet approximately half of entering freshmen have satisfied the Writing I requirement elsewhere and frequently delay taking additional writing courses at OSU. This issue is also acute in mathematics, where common math aversion or time elapsed since previous math courses often leads students to defer enrolling in OSU math courses. Such delays can undermine students' progressive development toward learning outcomes in the Baccalaureate Core and majors. Students and faculty consistently emphasize the importance of oral communication skills, and, although completing an oral communication course not a requirement, 90% of our graduating students currently fulfill the Writing III requirement with a communication course. The University has recently enacted significant changes to the Fitness requirement (i.e., adjustments to HHS231, paired with HHS241 or PAC courses). This process of evaluation and alignment should be continued in the context of the Learning Goals for Graduates of OSU.

To ensure deep foundational learning in the first year, the Core needs to link thoughtfully with efforts to improve first-year student success and engagement in colleges, departments and campus-wide programs. National research makes a strong case for learning communities as a successful mechanism for building meaningful connections among students and faculty within general education learning experiences. George D. Kuh⁵ identifies learning communities and intentional first-year experiences as “unusually effective” educational activities for fostering deeper learning and higher overall student achievement. Kuh also underscores how these positive effects are even greater for students of color, whose retention and 6-year graduation rates at OSU are lower than the overall OSU student average. Recent local university studies of learning community programs (University of Wisconsin, Temple University, University of Missouri) also demonstrate higher retention rates and academic achievement for learning community participants.⁶ By intentionally linking the first-year curriculum with learning-communities and other first-year experiences, we can bring new rigor and vitality to the critical first-year year of study.

The proposal:

1. A revised Bacc Core will require satisfactory completion of **four foundational skills courses** during a student's freshman year. These courses include:
 - Writing (121 or a 200-level course, depending on transfer units and/or placement),
 - Mathematics (according to placement information),

⁵ Kuh, G.D. 2009. *High-Impact educational practices: What they are, who has access to them, and why they matter*. Washington, DC: AAC&U.

⁶ Upcraft, Gardner, Barefoot. 2005. *Challenging and Supporting the First-Year Student: A Handbook for Improving the First Year of College*. Jossey-Bass.

- Oral communication, and
- Health and wellness (with a co-requisite small-class lab/PAC course).

Because OSU faculty members have consistently identified students' writing skills as a major area of concern, we recommend that the Faculty Senate commission a separate faculty committee to review in detail the current writing components of the Bacc Core, including WIC, and major programs. The committee should determine their effectiveness within the current structure as well as in the emerging revised implementation, and make future recommendations for improvements, including considering a placement requirement. We recommend lending particular attention to how to ensure that the new oral communication requirement does not reduce the total number of writing courses during a student's career, and how reading skills may be developed within these requirements. In addition, to address faculty concerns about students' quantitative skills, we recommend convening a separate committee to explore effective math placement practices with a view to ensuring student success in entry-level math courses and timely attainment of quantitative learning outcomes.

2. OSU should pilot scalable models (300-500 students) of **First-Year Learning Communities** during AY2010-11 or AY2011-2012 with the intention of growing the program in subsequent years to serve at least 50% of our first-year students. Models could include:
 - residence hall assignments aligned with course registration (e.g., WR121), with study tables and supplemental instruction facilitated by trained upper-class students in the residence halls;
 - topical freshman seminars (1-2 credits) taught by tenure-track instructors that integrate Core Perspectives courses with Skills requirements, or
 - enhanced U-Engage curricula with linked registration that integrate academic success skills with Core Skills courses and/or topical Perspectives courses

All these options would facilitate small-group learning experiences (e.g., 25 students) and more opportunity for faculty/student interaction and mentoring. The University Council on Student Engagement and Experience should develop program specifics in consultation with the new Bacc Core Administrative Team (see Element 5), Housing and Dining Services, and other relevant groups.

Implications:

Implementation of this proposal will require actions with responsibility indicated:

1. Improving course access/availability, including the guarantee of seats for first-year students in each of the four areas, a one- to two-year infusion of dollars to clear backlogs in writing and communications, and development of additional fitness offerings. [Academic Affairs, departments/colleges]
2. Designing new registration management strategies (such as alpha-sectioning) to plan and manage enrollment across the four curricular areas and provide for linked registration for some sections (and potential coordination with HDS) to support learning communities. [Office of the Registrar, University Council on Student Engagement and Experience]
3. Dedicating resources to support a basic learning-communities infrastructure [Academic Affairs]
4. Recruiting faculty and teaching assistants (with incentives) to teach within proposed learning communities (coordination of materials and schedules). [New Bacc Core Administrative Team, Academic Affairs]
5. Creating new policy and monitoring mechanisms regarding consequences if a first-year student fails to meet the four course requirements. [Office of the Registrar, BCC, and Academic Standing Committee]
6. Coordinating with highly-structured major programs of study to ensure that students' schedules have room for all four courses in the first year. [Academic Advising Council]
7. Revising the current Skills requirements such that oral communication is a first-year Bacc Core requirement. [BCC]

Element 4: Student Engagement with Experiential Learning

Background and Rationale:

The second focused curricular initiative seeks to increase student engagement with experiential learning. Here we define *experiential learning* to include various activities that have the common goal of immersing students in “hands-on” activities outside of the classroom and that emphasize the central role of experience in the learning process. Such activities include but are not limited to clinical education, cooperative education, field work, research, internships, practicum, service learning, student teaching, or study abroad experiences. OSU’s University Council on Student Engagement and Experience is currently supporting initiatives to enhance and expand opportunities for undergraduate research, service learning and study abroad, and OSU is thus well-positioned to promote these experiences as formal means of attaining the Learning Goals for Graduates of OSU (see Element 1 of this proposal).

Phase I feedback included interest in a general education model that promotes and/or incorporates occasions for experiential learning. Our Phase I Summary Report specifically recommends that any revisions to the structure should “[place] increased emphasis on local-to-global citizenship, civic engagement, sustainability, and *experiential learning*.” Additionally, enhancement and institutionalization of experiential learning can lead to increased retention and graduation rates both through the positive nature of the experiences themselves, and, for those earlier in their studies, the expectation of such an experience.

There is extensive scholarly support for incorporating experiential learning in higher education. David A. Kolb,⁷ a major experiential learning theorist suggests, “People do learn from their experience, and the results of that learning can be reliably assessed and certified for college credit.” More recently, George D. Kuh⁸ endorses experiential learning, undergraduate research, internships and other approaches as among the widely tested “high-impact educational practices” beneficial to students of all backgrounds. Kuh has documented significant gains in deep learning and three clusters of personal development outcomes for all populations of students, including gender, first-year and senior status, racial-ethnic groups. He notes that experiential learning can be particularly relevant to engagement and retention of students from underrepresented backgrounds.

The proposal:

1. Students may use service/hands on experiences to fulfill existing Baccalaureate Core course requirements (Student-Initiated). OSU creates an Experiential Learning (‘EL’) prefix or designator for new or existing EL opportunities.
 - Students may substitute one of these ‘EL’ designations to fulfill various existing Bacc Core requirements (e.g., a student could apply to fulfill the ‘Cultural Diversity’ category through a study abroad experience with an EL204 (Immersion in a Different Culture) designator.
 - Students must submit proposals for approval before the ‘ELXXX’ substitution is permitted. To ensure that credit-bearing experiential learning opportunities meet the criteria for college level learning, explicit goals, intended outcomes, credit hours and method(s) for assessment of learning must be detailed and approved in advance. Review and approval of proposals could be carried out by an Experiential Learning Coordinator – a fixed-term appointee drawn from faculty ranks and positioned within the new Baccalaureate Core administrative structure).

⁷ Kolb, D.A. 1984. *Experiential Learning: Experience as a source of learning and development*. New Jersey: Prentice-Hall.

⁸ Kuh, G.D. 2009, *op cit*.

2. Students may fulfill existing Baccalaureate Core categories using courses that formally incorporate an experiential learning component (Faculty-Initiated)
 - Professors and instructors of Baccalaureate Core courses may submit proposals to the Baccalaureate Core Committee to add the 'EL' suffix to their class. The suffix may or may not be accompanied by increased credit hours. A survey of current courses and programs indicates that experiential learning opportunities already exist in a variety of courses and departments at OSU. The EL suffix for new and existing courses that incorporate experiential learning would be valuable in tracking experiential learning opportunities and their use by students at OSU.

Implications:

1. The Experiential Learning ('EL') prefix will enrich of the current Bacc Core experience without changing the overall credit load for the Bacc Core, nor being resource intensive for OSU (because students take fewer classes here, yet get OSU credit for such experiences).
2. The Experiential Learning ('EL') suffix will contain built-in oversight and academic link through Bacc Core professors/instructors and would enrich existing courses and allow some to achieve previously unrealized potential. It will allow some faculty members who have made previous efforts to incorporate experiential learning to gain recognition for that work (by having the efforts acknowledged with additional course credit, if such is the case). By its nature experiential learning tends to promote synthesis of knowledge and skills from different areas and might be especially useful in helping students fulfill a Synthesis requirement in a meaningful way.
3. In the context of the Bacc Core, these out-of-class experiences will need to be accompanied by personal reflection and analysis by the student that places the work in an academic context. The 'EL' prefix would require administrative structure to standardize procedures for approval and assessment. Cornell University, the University of North Carolina, Montana State University and other institutions have successful programs of this kind with well defined policies and procedures for assessment of experiential learning based on the recommendations of the Council for Adult and Experiential learning. Proper guidelines and administrative oversight would also be needed for 'EL' suffix. The implementation and assessment mechanisms will need to be developed by the Baccalaureate Core Administrative Team and approved by the Baccalaureate Core Committee (Element 5).

Element 5: Organizational Structure

Background and Rationale:

The two principle criticisms of the Bacc Core are: 1) diffusion in the implementation and 2) the lack of tangible assessment of the Bacc Core's effectiveness. University accreditation reports have noted the lack of infrastructure for gauging, through direct evidence, whether the Bacc Core delivers its intended learning outcomes. There is therefore no basis to show that structural changes are needed in the Bacc Core. In addition, the review committee has noted that fundamental issues affecting the Bacc Core are often discussed and analyzed by the community but are rarely acted upon. This element of the proposal develops a revitalized organizational framework in a faculty-administration model of shared governance dedicated to communication of the philosophy, enhancement of curricular integration, and learner-focused assessment of the Bacc Core.

The Standing Rules of the Baccalaureate Core Committee (BCC) require periodic review of courses by categories based on inspection of syllabi and prepared instructor narratives. Decertification of Bacc Core courses is rare, occurring only after repeated failures to resolve deficiencies in syllabi. With no direct review of student learning outcomes at the course or program level, the BCC lacks data to judge whether the Bacc Core effectively promotes student achievement of learning goals. These factors have contributed to a culture in which the integrative features of the Bacc Core are obfuscated by long lists of courses. Large enrollment courses flourish despite uncertain standards of rigor and tenuous connections between category criteria and actual learning outcomes.

Over the years, the BCC has shared responsibility for Bacc Core oversight with a shifting array of administrative leaders forced to balance diverse priorities that often competed with the needs of the Bacc Core. The BCC has struggled to address the multi-faceted general education needs of thousands of students within the service component of faculty position descriptions. We are proposing changes to BCC review practices to address these challenges. However, because the Bacc Core is the most powerful lever available to enhance retention and graduation rates, we are supporting ongoing realignment of faculty development and administrative resources in Academic Affairs, and we are proposing that those resources be focused on the Bacc Core. We emphasize that establishment of the Bacc Core Administrative Team involves *no new dollars and no expansion of administrative FTE*. Rather, our proposal is that ongoing reorganization within Academic Affairs should re-dedicate existing funds and FTE to administration of the Core.

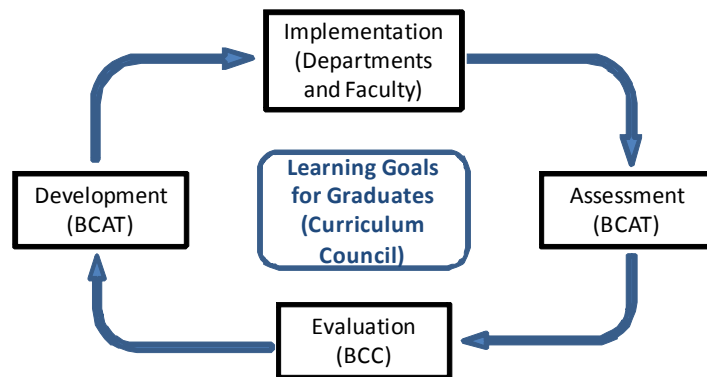


Figure 2. Organizational roles in the continuous improvement process

The proposal:

The shared governance model includes a revised role of the BCC and the establishment of the Baccalaureate Core Administrative Team (BCAT) within Academic Affairs. It is designed to provide a solid structural foundation to realize the other elements described in this proposal by assigning individual responsibility for

effectiveness of the Bacc Core within the Faculty Senate and the university administrative structure. Figure 2 identifies specific primary responsibilities in the cycle of continuous improvement.

This proposed administrative/faculty partnership is founded upon a clear delineation of purview and authority. The BCC will retain full decision-making authority over course and category reviews as well as determinations regarding Bacc Core policies and underlying philosophy. The new administrative position exists to ensure thorough implementation of BCC decisions through appropriate curricular, assessment and faculty development initiatives. The administrative position also holds responsibility for bringing relevant information to bear on BCC discussions and decisions -- such as national trends and best practices in general education and assessment and local OSU data on student learning outcomes, enrollments, and educational attainment.

1. *The role of the Baccalaureate Core Committee (BCC).* This proposal intends to remove the burden in the mechanics of implementing and assessing the Bacc Core from the BCC. This change will free the committee to define the strategic direction of the Bacc Core, identify central components and initiatives, and to make evaluation decisions at all levels based on compiled assessment data. The following procedural changes would be made to the BCC:

- Conduct annual assessments of the appropriateness of OSU’s “Comprehensive Learning Goals for Graduates” in general education and the role of Bacc Core requirements in achieving them ;
- Incorporate direct evidence of student learning outcomes in course and category reviews. Category review should include assessment of student achievement of Learning Goals appropriate for the category;
- The BCC maintains full authority for approval and de-certification of Bacc Core courses; and
- Establish and maintain criteria for membership in the Baccalaureate Core Instructional Faculty, and certify and renew membership based on participation in faculty development opportunities.

2. *The role of the Baccalaureate Core Administrative Team (BCAT).* Administrative accountability for the Bacc Core should be placed in the hands of an administrative team led by a dedicated, full-time administrator with expertise in general education and who possesses scholarly credentials suitable for a tenurable rank, preferably Full Professor. This administrative team should work in collaboration with the Faculty Senate, Executive Committee, Baccalaureate Core Committee, and Curriculum Council, directing resources to faculty and course development, coordinating advising practice in relation to the Bacc Core, promoting visibility of the Bacc Core within OSU’s institutional identity, and assessing student outcomes relative to Learning Goals established by the Senate and in alignment with professional accreditation assessment practices in Business, Education, Engineering, Pharmacy, and Veterinary Medicine.

To codify and promote the collaborative nature of this expectation, two further provisions ensure direct faculty involvement in the administrative component of Baccalaureate Core leadership:

- The Baccalaureate Core administrative team should include direct and ongoing involvement of tenured OSU faculty members in fixed-term, partial-FTE administrative appointments overseeing specific aspects of the Bacc Core; and
- Annual review of the administrative leader’s performance should include direct input from the Faculty Senate President.

Dedicated administrative focus on implementation of the Bacc Core will support updated BCC review practices and ensure that curricular vision established by the Faculty Senate forms the basis for student orientation and advising, faculty and course development, and actual practices within classrooms and throughout the Bacc Core.

Implications:

These ideas entail redirection of resources within Academic Affairs as well as changes in Faculty Senate practices of curricular review. The Baccalaureate Core touches the lives of all OSU undergraduates and directly involves a large proportion of the OSU Faculty. As such, University leadership acknowledges that the Bacc Core is a key contributor to the overall student experience and a powerful lever for enhancement of institutional retention and graduation rates. Most importantly, success of this proposal depends on the establishment of a dynamic faculty/administration partnership in shared governance that reinforces the curricular vision of the Faculty with administrative commitment, that informs the Faculty with expertise and currency in national trends and practice in general education, and that supports effective teaching and learning with real assessment of student learning in the Bacc Core.