

BASIC STUDIES REVISION TASK FORCE  
PROPOSAL Spring 2006

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A. HISTORY OF THE PROCESS

In January 2004, the Faculty Senate, at the behest of the Chancellor, initiated the Basic Studies Revision Task Force. The first meeting of the task force was with the chancellor, where the task force received the following charge:

UNCW students deserve the highest quality academic experience, not only in their major field of study, but also in the basic studies curriculum central to a UNCW education. Unfortunately, our basic studies curriculum had not been reviewed in more than twenty years, and so I formed a Basic Studies Task Force to review what we currently have and to propose a curriculum that reflects our best judgment on what our students need to know in order for them to succeed not just in their major coursework, but as citizens in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

Such a review requires that we ask ourselves some fundamental questions, the most basic of which is, “To what end are we educating our students, and does our basic studies curriculum prepare them, coherently and intentionally, for that goal?” If our response is that we are preparing an educated citizenry, rather than just preparing our students for jobs, then we must make certain that our basic studies program truly prepares them to deal with the broad range of issues that will face them and gives them the skills, competencies, and knowledge of different perspectives they’ll undoubtedly need.

My charge to the task force was to review the programs at other universities recognized for the quality of their core programs and to propose the ideal curriculum for us, based on our values and mission. I encouraged the Task Force to use this opportunity as a way to create a structure that would lead our students to overcome their frequent belief that general education is an obstacle to overcome as quickly as possible rather than something integral to their entire learning experience.

Finally, Provost Hosier and I both asked that the task force free themselves from concerns about FTEs or resources. Instead, we asked that they dream—about what would be ideal for our particular students on this particular campus.

Time line of events and accomplishments:

1. The committee has met virtually every Friday during the academic year since the second week of January 2004.
2. We reviewed the basic studies programs of all sister schools in the UNC system, all of the benchmark and aspirant schools, and many assorted schools picked randomly as each of us has seen fit.
3. Each committee member brought to the table individual ideas about what a basic studies program should be. From that, discussions quickly led to two models for a basic studies plan. The one presented below eventually won the day.
4. We have written a draft of What, Why, and How a Core Curriculum should be (see below) for inclusion in the catalog
5. September 9, 2004 – The Task Force submitted to the faculty at large the first results of our work, in which we put forth the scheme that appears below (with some modification)
6. Following this, The Chair called representatives from each of the Schools and Colleges of the University to initiate a meeting time and place for discussion of the scheme. The following groups requested such a meeting:
  - College of Arts and Sciences Chairs – September 15
  - General College – September 23
  - English faculty – September 24
  - School of Education – September 30
  - Student Government Association – ?
  - School of Nursing – October 12
  - School of Nursing – October 15
  - College of Arts and Sciences chairs committee on basic studies – November 17
7. Three general forums were called in which all faculty were invited to share their points of view regarding basic studies and the scheme we had submitted earlier.
  - Forum 1 – October 20 (14 attendees)
  - Forum 2 – November 2 (16 attendees)
  - Forum 3 – November 19 (19 attendees)
8. Following all the input, the task force incorporated new ideas and concerns into the basic scheme, working weekly to arrive at the proposal found below.
9. Fall 2005 – final proposal submitted to the Faculty Senate.

## B. RATIONALE FOR BASIC STUDIES

Note from Senate Steering Committee: The yellow highlighted courses in this section (B) are illustrative examples only. This list is not intended to be complete. No such examples will appear in the catalog copy.

The Core Curriculum is a set of requirements for all students seeking a baccalaureate degree at UNCW. The Core Curriculum is the foundation for all university study and informs further inquiry in every discipline a student may select as a major. In keeping with the Core Values of the University, it gives breadth and balance to a university degree, and fosters the personal reflection and development typically associated with earning an undergraduate degree. To flourish in a dynamic and complex multicultural world, UNC Wilmington graduates should be mature, responsible, and well educated in the sciences and humanities. The Core Curriculum is that medium in which students gain the skills, knowledge, and values necessary for participating fully in a global society.

Students who complete the Core Curriculum will:

1. acquire the academic skills needed to locate, evaluate, and use information;  
(Freshman Seminar, Core Disciplinary Courses)
2. understand the basic values of academic life at the university level;  
(Freshman Seminar, Core Disciplinary Courses)
3. be able to think and express themselves critically in speech and writing in relation to the broader questions of knowledge and value raised in the arts, sciences, and humanities;  
(Freshman Seminar, English 109, Core Disciplinary Courses, Senior Capstone; Oral and Writing Competencies)
4. be able to communicate and express themselves clearly in speech and writing in a foreign language;  
(Foreign Language requirement)
5. know how to examine problems from quantitative, qualitative, and scientific perspectives;  
(Core Disciplinary Courses)
6. understand and respect diversity among people of different racial, ethnic, religious and cultural backgrounds;  
(Freshman Seminar, Senior Capstone, Social Studies, Diversity requirement)
7. understand the disciplinary and ethical responsibilities of active citizenship in an increasingly global society\*\*.  
(Senior Capstone course, Diversity, Global Issues requirements)

Core Disciplinary Requirements include: Requirements in Fine Arts, History, Philosophy, Literature (ENG 110), Social Sciences, Mathematics and Quantitative Reasoning, and Natural Sciences.

At the heart of the Core Curriculum is the philosophical conviction that university students should experience how various disciplines investigate, understand, and construct bodies of knowledge differently. The Core Curriculum exposes students to the ways that individual disciplines approach topics, problems, and issues that inform the human

condition and creates opportunities for students to experience many points of contact and divergence across the curriculum as a whole.

C. TEMPLATE OF THE PLAN

**BASIC STUDIES REVISION TASK FORCE**  
**THE NEW BASIC STUDIES PROPOSAL**  
May 6, 2005

(3h) The Freshman Experience

UNI 101 -- Freshman Seminar

UNI \_\_?\_\_ -- The EDGE

UNI \_\_?\_\_ -- Learning Community Integrative Seminar

UNI \_\_?\_\_ -- Life of the Mind

HON 110 – Honors Freshman Seminar

(3h) ENG 109 (future ENG 101)

(3h) ENG 110 (future ENG 102) or other writing-intensive literature-based course

(3h) Mathematics and Statistics

(3h) Quantitative and Logical Reasoning

(2h) Physical Education

(3h) Foreign Language

(through 201 in language from high school or through 102 if new language)

(3h) Fine Arts

(3h) History

(3h) Philosophy

(6h) Social Sciences – from two disciplines

(7h) Natural Sciences – 1 from each category; one must be a laboratory course

biological sciences

physical sciences

(3h) CAP 495

(0h) 3 writing emphasis courses from across the curriculum to be taken after completion of  
ENG 109-110; at least one course must be from the major

(0h) 1 diversity-related course

(0h) 1 global issues course

(0h) 1 oral competency course

(0h) 1 computer competency course

(45h)

## D. RATIONALE STATEMENTS FOR CHANGES

### 1. Freshman Experience

Justification for a required Freshman Experience course is derived from the first goal set forth in the UNC Wilmington Strategic Plan to “Create the most powerful learning experience possible for our students” and objective five, to “Improve experiences for students during initial entry into campus life and at critical junctures in their education.” During their first two semesters, the shared experience that introductory course requirements in a core curriculum provide for first-year students aids in forging important bonds and in providing a critical early connection to the university’s community. The options within The Freshman Experience include: Freshman Seminar, Freshman Seminar Learning Communities, Cornerstone Learning Communities Integrative Seminar, The EDGE (Service Learning component), Life of the Mind, and Honors Freshman Seminar. The small class size and personal attention from faculty committed to involvement in the Freshman Experience concept enhance the likelihood that students will enjoy a successful transition to intellectual and cultural life on campus.

As a result of any of the courses offered, students will:

- understand the power of reflection and be able to effectively use it to support their learning;
- set learning goals, continually assess their progress and identify appropriate next steps in order to accomplish the learning goals;
- understand the responsibilities and opportunities associated with effective collaboration;
- understand the attributes and benefits of becoming self-directed learners and be able to function as such;
- participate in discussions of real-life issues as informed, critical members of the group;
- learn to value diversity of every sort;
- understand how to access and use a variety of tools to support learning (e.g. library resources, internet, writing center and math lab, study skills, collaboration, cross-referencing, seeking out different perspectives).

#### **The Freshman Seminar**

The convincing results of research indicate that along with quality academic advising, participation in a freshman seminar is one of the top three contributors identified with student success. Consistent with the mission of University College, students develop sound study and problem

solving skills, and engage in career exploration and research. Instructors and academic advisors partner as mentors to students introducing them to the array of support services the university offers. The small class size encourages open communication, the development of mutual respect and the opportunity to celebrate difference within the university community.

### **The EDGE**

A seminar designed to introduce students to life-long learning and engagement, the EDGE offers a UNCW faculty lecture series, topical readings, and campus and community involvement. Leadership and critical thinking components are included.

### **Learning Community Integrative Seminar**

Both the Cornerstone and Freshman Seminar Learning Communities connect students with two or three designated basic studies courses during their first semester. The clustered courses are organized around common themes or skills acquisition. While the Cornerstone Learning Communities are residential and the Freshman Seminar Learning Community is not, both are designed to aid first year students in their transition to college through the development of support systems with peers, academic advisors, and UNCW services.

### **The Life of the Mind**

Not yet ready to be classified as learners, most students begin their university experience eager to complete assignments as instructed only for the sake of making progress toward a degree in higher education. Often the true joy and excitement associated with learning comes later when students make critical connections between knowledge and their own lives. Through exploration, questioning, and assimilation of new material, students' early interest in subjects can develop into passionate engagement. When students are provided with concrete skills to enhance the learning process, the powerful rewards that learning engenders will follow, and the university's ultimate goal of developing life-long learners becomes probable rather than possible. **The Life of the Mind** course is designed to teach students early in their freshman experience that becoming a purposeful learner will influence their success not only throughout their university years but throughout their lives.

### **Honors Freshman Seminar**

Team-taught, this course introduces all freshman honors students to the college experience by direct involvement in research, service, and leadership activities.

2. ENG 109 – 110 (future ENG 101-102) (with course descriptions)

Basic studies writing requirements are intended to actively engage students in various aspects of the composing process, ranging from invention, development, and arrangement to revising and editing; to refine students' written facility in critical analysis and argument; to familiarize students with various processes, techniques, and methods that figure into academic research; and to sustain students' writing experience beyond English 109 and English 110, both within and outside of their major disciplines. In addition, consonant with the philosophical orientation of the Core Curriculum, basic studies writing requirements should facilitate students' discovery and articulation of personal meaning; should sensitize students, through the interrelated processes of reading and writing, to values and beliefs within and across diverse cultural and global communities; and should stimulate a sense of active citizenship and ethical responsibility. In order to fulfill basic studies writing requirements, students must complete the following:

- 1) English 109: College Writing and Reading (3 credit hours), the focus of which is academic, research-based writing and the enrollment in which is limited to 19 students.
- 2) English 110: Introduction to Literature or another designated "writing-intensive" basic studies literature course (3 credit hours), the completion of which satisfies the student's basic studies literature requirement. English 110 is an introductory course in reading and responding to literature in a variety of genres and/or themes. As a writing-intensive course, English 110, like other designated "writing-intensive" basic studies literature courses, will require at least 2500 words of formal writing, to be composed, revised, and proofread outside of class. In addition to the required formal writing, the course may also include informal spontaneous writing, such as written observations, journal entries, in-class essay exams, and informal reports. Enrollment in "writing-intensive" basic studies literature classes is limited to 25 students to allow instructors to collect and comment on drafts of essays, hold individual conferences on drafts, provide written feedback and suggestions for revision and so forth.

Currently, to satisfy the basic studies composition requirement, students must complete a sequence of English 101: College Writing and Reading I and English 102: College Writing and Reading II or must complete English 103: College Writing and Reading (Advanced). According to the proposed requirements, the current composition requirement would be subsumed by English 109 and the basic studies literature requirement would be satisfied by completing English 110, though this and other relevant basic studies literature courses would involve a "writing-intensive" emphasis that currently does not apply. Moreover, enrollment in English 109 would be reduced from 25 to 19 students and enrollment in English 110 and other "writing-intensive" basic studies literature courses would be reduced from 35 to 25. While written work in English 110 and other writing-intensive basic studies literature courses would be assigned as an important course

component, it is not expected that the instructor devote class time to the teaching of writing.

3. MATH and STT (with criteria statements)

As we human beings think with symbols, primarily words and numbers, the liberal arts are consequently the arts of processing these symbols. Therefore, for centuries the study of languages and mathematics has been at the center of the liberal arts. The major function of mathematics has been to provide scientific models for the description of reality. These classical models have tended to be deterministic where calculus remains a primary tool. More recently, statistical models of reality are increasingly utilized. The requirement of three hours in mathematics or statistics in the basic studies curriculum introduces students to the college level study of at least one of these approaches or to additional mathematical knowledge that is prerequisite to this study.

4. Quantitative and Logical Reasoning (with criteria statement)

Either (1) one additional course beyond the mathematical or statistics courses used for the Mathematical and Statistics Requirement, or (2) a course in logical reasoning, or (3) a quantitative methods course from any discipline that acquaints a student with how quantitative reasoning is applied. In order to be listed here, at least half of the course content of a quantitative methods course must involve some of the following: modeling and problem solving using quantitative methods, data collection, representation, and interpretation, mathematical or statistical analysis and numerical reasoning.

In order to function successfully in this diverse and interconnected world, its citizens must be ready to understand, apply, and communicate logical and quantitative approaches to commonplace issues as they arise in the public forums of democracy or in the choices to be made to enrich one's own private life. Development of a quantitative literate citizenry is the subject of an ongoing national discussion (See for example *Mathematics and Democracy: The Case for Quantitative Literacy* published in 2001 by the National Council on Education and the Disciplines). Responsibility for further development of these quantitative and logical reasoning skills, introduced in the three hour mathematics and statistics requirement, must be shared across the curriculum as are writing and other critical thinking skills.

Already well over half of the graduates of this university complete the major programs that meet the Mathematics and Statistics Requirement and the Quantitative and Logical Reasoning Requirement as described above. Within the University of North Carolina system, nearly 60% of the total undergraduate enrollment attend the seven schools (UNCCH, NCSU, UNCA, ASU, UNCC, NCAT, and FSU) that require all undergraduates to complete the equivalent of the

two requirements above. Students of this university are as well prepared to study basic quantitative topics in all disciplines as students from these other schools and should do so in order to become the quantitative literate citizens expected by both national and local standards.

5. Foreign Language

The change in UNC Wilmington's foreign language requirement from a simple 3 hour requirement to 3 hours at the 201 level (or 102 for a language not previously studied) reflects our commitment to preparing students to function as citizens in a world where international and intercultural communication are increasingly necessary. Study of foreign languages is necessarily the study of different world views and cultures as well as of the symbolic systems through which meanings are expressed. Through contact with foreign languages and cultures, students develop perspectives on their own linguistic and cultural foundations, better preparing them for citizenship in their own communities. As the need for Americans with foreign language proficiency grows, North Carolina schools have responded by increasing the foreign language requirement for college preparatory students to two units, better preparing incoming UNC Wilmington students for study at the intermediate level. By bringing the foreign language requirement into alignment with that of other UNC system universities, the University signals its commitment to keeping our graduates competitive and prepared for the challenges of a rapidly changing world.

6. Social Sciences

The social sciences are a group of academic disciplines that study the human aspects of the world. They diverge from the arts and humanities in that the social sciences emphasize the use of the scientific method and rigorous standards of evidence in the study of humanity, including quantitative and qualitative methods. As such, they are a central component of a liberal arts education in that they deal with contemporary and applied issues that face modern humanity. Given the number of disciplines (Anthropology, Criminal Justice, Economics, Geography, Political Science, Psychology, Social Work, and Sociology), courses should be taken from at least two disciplines to ensure breadth of study.

7. Senior Capstone

The university core curriculum is designed as a foundation for all university study and contributes to inquiry in every discipline. It underlies four years of growth and development. The university core curriculum offers breadth and balance to a university degree and fosters the development of an educated person. It exposes students to the ways that individual disciplines approach common topics, problems, and issues that inform the human condition and creates opportunities for students to experience many points of contact and divergence across the curriculum as a whole.

The journey begins with the freshman learning experience. By collaborating on class assignments with students of diverse backgrounds the student learns to appreciate the value of different perspectives. Team work, exciting topics, and encouragement to think independently offer a dynamic combination of experiences that will set the student on the road to life-long learning. This in turn excites students in such a way that their stance as learners becomes a guiding force throughout their university experience, adding depth to their learning, excitement to their experience, and sophistication to their ability to be successful in life.

The senior seminar is designed as the final experience in the core curriculum process. As such, it is an upper-division (400 level), 3 credit hour course that allows students to utilize their expertise in their discipline, along with the tools, skills and perspectives obtained in the core curriculum as they again collaborate with students from disciplines across campus to explore issues of significance. This seminar enhances appreciation of the unique contribution people with differing views and talents can offer and increases the ability to work effectively with others. It helps broaden horizons, identifies new ways of knowing, and invites further growth and learning.

The course will be offered through the departments across campus. Enrollment will be controlled so that no more than 12 students (of 24 maximum) majoring in the department offering the course can enroll in the course. This will allow students from a variety of disciplines to be represented in the class.

For example, the Department of Curricular Studies might offer a CAP 495 course entitled “The Inequities of Schooling,” in which they explore the differences in educational opportunities students experience in different parts of this country. Students enrolled from all other disciplines would work together, using their combined strengths and assets, to discover solutions to the problems and identify ways to make a difference. The Department of Biology and Marine Biology might offer another CAP 495 called “Bioethics and the New Embryology” in which issues related to stem-cell research, cloning, and in vitro fertilization would be explored. The Department of Art could offer a class exploring the impact of the arts on civilization and what is lost when the arts are not a part of the community. The scope of this approach would be limited only by the imaginations of the faculty offering the course.

8. Diversity and Global Issues (criterion statement)

Our students graduate to live within a modern world where nations are economically and politically interdependent. Success is dependent in part on understanding the interplay between cultural diversity and global issues. A liberal arts education provides opportunities to study the origins of cultural differences and the “cultural adhesives” that bind people together in modern nation-states. It

offers opportunities to study abroad, learning first-hand about life in different cultures and languages.

Thus, all students must complete at least one course concerning Diversity and Global Issues. This requirement allows students to explore the cultural diversity and interactions in the United States and around the world and can be met by a wide variety of classes across several disciplines. Courses from this category will explore diverse cultural values and viewpoints. Its goal is to expose students to the many facets of a diverse society and allow self-understanding in the contemporary and pluralistic world.

Courses that would meet this category should address some aspect(s) of four interrelated goals for students. They are: (1) understanding diverse cultures and understanding cultures as diverse; (2) developing intercultural skills; (3) understanding global processes; and (4) preparing for citizenship, both local and global. (Taken from *Globalizing Knowledge: Connecting International and Intercultural Skills*, Cornwell and Stoddard).

9. Writing-emphasis (criterion statement)

In keeping with the proposed changes in English basic studies requirements, students must take three additional writing courses before graduation. A writing-emphasis course is a course in any discipline in which written work is a significant course component. A course can be given this designation if it meets the following criteria: students engage in significant formal writing appropriate to the course and at least one-half of the final grade is based on written work (assignments, essay exams, etc.). One of these three courses must be within the major. Such courses would highlight the major forms of writing specific to that discipline, such as business proposals, laboratory reports, ethnographic studies, and so forth. Desired outcomes of such courses would be for students to recognize and use writing in discipline-specific contexts, to gain better understanding of how given disciplines define themselves, and to use writing to think substantively about discipline-specific issues. Furthermore, requiring additional writing-emphasis courses, at least one of which students will likely take at the upper-division level, will ensure that they will continue practicing to write throughout their college experience.