

General Education Reform

Pre-Roadshow Background Information | February 2022

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What is General Education

General Education provides students with the skills, knowledge, and experiences that will ensure their success during and after college, and in their professional, personal, and civic lives. No single major can provide a student with all the knowledge and skills they will need to be successful and fulfilled. General Education deepens students' understanding of the world around them and of themselves as human beings, opening their eyes to other worlds and other perspectives. Through General Education, students become ready to engage as citizens to make a difference in a diverse democracy¹.

Baccalaureate Core at Oregon State University

OSU's current Bacc Core was established in the 20th century, approximately 30 years ago. At the time, aspects of the curriculum were considered visionary². While there are still positive elements of our general education, it has limitations which are increasingly becoming barriers. As the profile of our student body has evolved and the university has expanded to offer full undergraduate degrees in Bend and through Ecampus, so has the demand to deliver a general education curriculum that meets the needs of our diverse learners. Reform of general education to engage the 21st century learner will lead to recruitment and retention of first-year and transfer students.

While the Bacc Core has remained largely unchanged over the past three decades, the university Faculty Senate and administration has commissioned three different reviews of the program:

- 2002 – Review and Relevance³ of the Baccalaureate Core Program
- 2010 – Vitalization⁴ of General Education at Oregon State University
- 2018 – Shared Governance⁵ Vision for OSU's Baccalaureate Core

Baccalaureate Core Ad Hoc Review Committee – 2.0 (AY 2020-2021)

Based on the recommendations from the 2018 Shared Governance report, the Faculty Senate Executive Council (FSEC) and Vice Provost of Academic Affairs (Dr. Alix Gitelman) hosted listening sessions in 2019. The results of the listening session yielded the creation and charge of the Baccalaureate Core Ad Hoc Review Committee⁶ (BCRC 2.0) in winter 2020, the committee met through fall 2021. The BCRC 2.0's charge was to *develop draft templates of Bacc Core/General Education models*. The Committee reviewed the Fall 2019 listening session comments, Association of American Colleges and Universities (AAC&U) general education recommendations, the requirements of the Oregon Transfer Map, and the 2010 Baccalaureate Core Review Committee report. Additionally, the committee researched general education structure at over 40 institutions nationally and internationally (including large R1, land grant, public, private). Following review and discussion of the pros, cons, and applicability of general education requirements from other institutions, the Committee split into groups to develop alternative templates.

Considerations for templates:

- Have fewer credits (45 total) and categories than current model
- Become more transfer friendly
- Align with Oregon's Core Transfer Map (CTM), AAC&U LEAP best practices, and assessment and accreditation requirements.

The general themes from the templates were shared at Faculty Senate in spring 2021. Following the successful completion of the charge, the BCRC 2.0 was retired and the FSEC was ready to move the revision process to the reform phase.

Baccalaureate Core Reform Committee – 2.1 (AY 2021-2022)

A team from OSU attended the AAC&U Summer Institute on General Education and Assessment in June 2021. Following best practices guidance gained from that experience, the Faculty Senate Executive Committee recommended the second iteration of our reform effort start with a high-level discussion of why we are reforming the Bacc Core and what we hope to achieve with general education at OSU. The Faculty Senate Executive Committee developed a comprehensive charge⁷ and commissioned the Baccalaureate Core Reform Committee⁸.

Considerations for reforming templates:

- Students First
- Best practices - NACE Career Competencies, AAC&U LEAP outcomes
- CTM
- Reduction in credits to 45 total
- Incorporating signature elements of Oregon State University
- Don't let the budget model drive curriculum and pedagogy, the budget should support our mission

The committee met for a half day retreat and biweekly throughout fall and winter term. Additionally, the committee broke into four workgroups to tackle specific issues, make recommendations, and formulate questions to pose to our stakeholders. Through thoughtful discussion and strong group collaboration, the Reform Committee developed and adopted the proposed mission and goals for the 21st century Bacc Core (below). We then reflected on the templates the BCRC 2.0 developed and made updates to reflect the mission and goals.

Workgroups:

The workgroups each provided a robust report⁹ and will continue to meet throughout the year to refine and resolve specific areas related to the reform.

- Mission and Goals
- Bookends – Transition, Career Integration and Synthesis
- Difference, Power, and Discrimination and Anti-Racism
- Writing Intensive Curriculum and Writing II

Proposed Mission

Oregon State University's Baccalaureate Core is a universal educational experience for the 21st-century learner that promotes economic, social, cultural, and environmental progress for the people of Oregon, the nation, and the world. The curriculum strives to develop students' intellectual capacities and resiliency to be critical agents who transform knowledge into action. Through deep and integrative experiences, OSU's general education meets students where they are in their educational journey and equips them for meaningful, lifelong learning. Our Baccalaureate Core is designed to foster student potential to innovate and change the world by solving complex problems, adapting to change, and becoming community members in a global society.

Proposed Goals for General Education at Oregon State University

Foundational Modes of Inquiry and Innovation — students will use multiple modes of inquiry, within and across a variety of disciplines, to develop fundamental skills and breadth of knowledge that promote lifelong learning and creative problem-solving.

Social and Environmental Justice — students will examine evidence from a variety of perspectives to grow their cultural and environmental awareness and increase their capacity to enact social and environmental justice.

Navigation of a Complex Global World — students will apply skills necessary for navigating a world with multiple perspectives and global interconnectedness.

From Here to Career — students will gain professional skills and competencies designed for adaptability, longevity, and integrity in a global workforce.

Budget Model Considerations:

Changes to the OSU's Baccalaureate Core can:

- Improve revenue by helping transfer students
- Free up faculty capacity for focus on majors and scholarship
- Improve student retention and graduation

Budget model is one tool to support OSU's goals; it will change if goals/curriculum change

- The budget model is currently under review and may change anyway
- Changes in general education would require "recalibrating" the model to match missions
- The Budget model should align incentives in the model with OSU goals for general education
- A "hold harmless" to mission commitment (not a "hold harmless" in all dollars)

The Baccalaureate Core now:

- Consumes a lot of faculty effort delivering over 1,000 courses
- Five colleges deliver about 93% of the Bacc Core. Two colleges deliver 67% of total.
- Of those five, 20% to 33% of Bacc Core teaching is to students in their own majors
- Students still need 180 credits---likely to take more within the students' majors if the Bacc Core is reduced

Next steps:

- Meet with college leadership groups, host college forums, stakeholder roadshows (students, campus partners, community colleges, alumni, industry)
- Gather feedback on proposed mission and goals, templates and specific questions
- Revise down to single model
- Present to the Faculty Senate in May, move vote to the floor in June
- Implement curriculum AY 2022-24 (develop learning outcomes, criteria and rationale, course development and induction, faculty workshops)

Additional resources

¹Association for General and Liberal Studies ([link](#))

²The Chronicle of Higher Education, *Oregon State U. Adopts "Baccalaureate Core" Requirement* ([link](#))

³2002 review and relevance of the Baccalaureate Core Program ([link](#))

⁴2010 Vitalization of general education at Oregon State University from the Baccalaureate Core Ad Hoc Review Committee ([link](#))

⁵2018 Shared Governance Vision from the Baccalaureate Core Implementation and Leadership Workgroup (BCIL, [link](#))

⁶2019 Baccalaureate Core Ad Hoc Review process and committee members ([link](#))

⁷2021 Baccalaureate Core Reform Committee charge and timeline ([link](#))

⁸2021 Baccalaureate Core Reform Committee members ([link](#))

⁹Workgroup reports ([link](#))

