Executive Summary

This report on the effectiveness of writing curriculum within the Baccalaureate Core at Oregon State University has been prepared by the Committee for the Review of Writing within the Baccalaureate Core, which was appointed by the Faculty Senior Executive Committee to assess writing components within the Baccalaureate Core. It is being submitted to Dr. Vicki Tolar Burton, Transitional Director for the Implementation of the Baccalaureate Core, the Baccalaureate Core Committee, and the Faculty Senior Executive Committee.

The review of writing in the Baccalaureate Core derives from a charge made by the Vitalization Report of the Baccalaureate Committee adopted by the OSU Faculty Senate on June 10, 2010.

The purpose of this report is to present and analyze findings on the status of writing components within the current Baccalaureate Core structure. These findings constitute data that was drawn explicitly for the purpose of assessing the effectiveness of writing within the Baccalaureate Core. This data includes a review of current syllabi, survey and focus group responses from faculty, and comparative program data from peer institutions. Recommendations based on this data and the committee’s subsequent analysis are presented here as a means of suggesting potential changes to the structure and management of writing components within the Baccalaureate Core so as to improve undergraduate students’ experiences and faculty satisfaction related to writing.

The committee found that, although writing at OSU is not yet in a dire situation, we are not where we want to be, neither in terms of internal expectations, nor with respect to peer institutions. Moreover, recent trends are moving us away from our goals, such that attention and action are necessary. Based on the data gathered for this report, we believe that action should be taken to improve the following key areas:

- Faculty, Student, and University Involvement
- Clarity of Expectations
- Quality of Assignments
- Effective Ongoing Evaluation of Students

Most importantly, we believe that a culture of writing must be developed at OSU. This goal—which will be important to the ongoing success and reputations of OSU graduates—will require participation at the local classroom level, as well as ongoing commitment from the Baccalaureate Core Committee and top levels of university administration.

This report was prepared by the Committee for the Review of Writing within the Baccalaureate Core during AY 2011-2012. This committee was chaired by Dr. Susan Meyers, Director of Writing. Members included Dennis Bennett, Writing Center Assistant Director; Dr. David Bernell, Assistant Professor of Political Science; Tracy Ann Robinson, CoE Communication Collaboratory Director; Dr. Marion Rossi, Associate Professor of Theater; and Dr. Holly Swisher, Associate Professor of Math.