Appendix E – 2012-2013 Baccalaureate Core Committee Annual Report

To: Rebecca Warner, Senior Vice Provost for Academic Affairs
    Susie Brubaker-Cole, Associate Provost for Academic Success and Engagement
    Kevin Gable, Faculty Senate President
    W. Dan Edge, Faculty Senate President-Elect
    Robert Mason, Faculty Senate Executive Committee Liaison to the Baccalaureate Core Committee (BCC)

From: Kerry Kincanon and Marion Rossi, BCC Co-Chairs and the entire BCC

Date: June 10, 2013

Re: Baccalaureate Core Leadership

The end of the 2012-13 academic year culminates an amazing three year period for attention and effort towards General Education at Oregon State University. On the heels of the Ad Hoc Baccalaureate Core Task Force, which produced the Vitalization of General Education at OSU report in 2010 (see http://oregonstate.edu/senate/committees/other/bcr/reports/), a dedicated team of OSU faculty (including the BCC) has drafted and implemented Category Learning Outcomes (CLO) for the distinct Baccalaureate Core Categories and worked closely with representatives from Academic Affairs to cultivate attentiveness to undergraduate student learning relative to these outcomes. This team has:

- Codified the progressive nature of our core by implementing first and second year skills requirements for speech, mathematics, and writing.
- Improved the new and change course proposals process for potential Baccalaureate Core courses by revising the Bacc Core Curricular Proposal System questions to focus on how students will achieve the relevant CLO in the course.
- Launched a re-envisioned Category Review process built upon a platform of shared governance whereby the Office of Academic Programs, Assessment, and Accreditation (APAA) helps the Baccalaureate Core Committee gather information from OSU academic units on courses in selected Baccalaureate Core categories.
- Initiated, with this Category Review process, an assessment process on a seven-year cycle that, in the aggregate, will help OSU attend to the efficacy of the Baccalaureate Core as a whole as well as meet the concern of our accreditors, the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities, that we shore up our assessment of student learning in our general education curriculum.

A key player in the realization of all these improvements and processes has been Vicki Tolar Burton, the Transitional Director of Baccalaureate Core Implementation. Vicki’s appointment in 2010 was made in service of helping OSU to implement the salient recommendations in the aforementioned Vitalization report. Needless to say, Vicki has been most productive in her time in the position, exemplified by the Vitalization recommendations having come to fruition. With the “implementation” complete, it makes sense that Vicki’s position in its current form sunset. However, the collective efforts of the last three years to vitalize the Baccalaureate Core have illuminated to those involved (especially those of us on the BCC) the need for a permanent Director of Baccalaureate Core. The intent of this memo is to advocate for such a position.
More than anything, the findings of the Vitalization report and collaborative efforts of the last three years have highlighted the need for OSU to think about the Baccalaureate Core not just as an element of undergraduate education but also as a program. And while there is no question that the faculty oversight of the Baccalaureate Core in the form of the BCC is imperative, relying solely on a volunteer committee with transient membership and leadership to administrate a program is not sustainable. A report to the OSU 2007 strategic planning leadership by the 2002 Baccalaureate Core Committee itemized a number of suggestions for improving the Baccalaureate Core. As noted in the Vitalization report, the absence of an administrative stakeholder resulted in no action being taken on any of those widely discussed improvements. Some were addressed in Vitalization under the leadership of the transitional director over the past two years. Here is an accounting of some the important Bacc Core impacts beyond the capacity of the BCC, its co-chairs, and the Faculty Senate leadership that go towards maintaining program excellence:

- Marketing and reminders involving the Bacc Core (e.g. directed communication prior to the start of each term with information/reminders about Bacc Core Category Learning Outcomes and syllabus requirements).
- Regular content maintenance and enhancement of the Baccalaureate Core web site that was initiated by Vicki.
- Group and individual consultation with OSU faculty on integrating Category Learning Outcomes into Bacc Core courses and developing manageable plans for assessing them

In many respects, these past few years have been much about the adjustment and development of processes to meet the institutional and regional expectations for a stronger general education curriculum. Having a leadership team of the BCC co-chairs, Vicki in her role, and the Assistant Director of Assessment (Stefani Dawn from APAA) to shoulder the burden of change and implementation has been ideal. That the current co-chairs are cycling off the committee at the end of year and that the transitional director position is ending highlights other long term advantages of having a permanent director:

- A permanent director would provide continuity and institutional memory to support the BCC (which sees partial change in membership annually) in its functions.
- A permanent director in an ex-officio role could offer insight and guidance on the Course and Category Review functions of the BCC, and consult with the co-chairs when Executive Committee provides other charges to the BCC.
- A permanent director could be the keeper of the bigger picture in terms of the Bacc Core as program and could shepherd long term program enhancements that carry over from year-to-year amidst changes in the BCC leadership and membership.
- A permanent director could attend to the nuanced faculty and unit needs in terms consultation and development around their Bacc Core courses and their assessment of student learning in those courses.
- A permanent director could work directly with the Assistant Director of Assessment to coordinate the Category Review process and organize materials in way that streamlines the workload of the BCC and put them in prime position to complete its essential function – quality control on new and existing courses in the Baccalaureate Core. The two could also assure that OSU is well-positioned to meet any new or continuing demands of our accrediting body relative to the general education component of our undergraduate degrees.
- A permanent director could liaison between the BCC and initiatives where the Bacc Core as a program is at play in our relationships with other community college and university partners (e.g. Degree Partnership Program, Transfer Articulation Agreements, Dual Degree Partnerships with International Institutions).
- A permanent director might be jointly situated in the Office of Academic Programs, Assessment, and Accreditation and the Center for Teaching and Learning given the responsibility to assessment, accreditation, and faculty consultation and development in course improvement and innovation.
Precedence for such ex-officio support of a Faculty Senate committee exists in other areas of the university. The Registrar’s Office has an ex-officio representative on the Academic Standing Committee and the Academic Requirements Committee, supports those committees administratively, and communicates decisions on their behalf. Even within the Baccalaureate Core itself, we have two categories, Difference, Power, and Discrimination and Writing Intensive Curriculum, which are constituted as programs and have faculty administrative leadership to oversee existing courses and support the development of new courses.

Finally, we’re aware that the university has turned its attention towards initiatives that will enhance the First Year Experience. Given that undergraduate students are engaging with Baccalaureate Core from the point of matriculation, the Baccalaureate Core is an essential component of the First Year Experience. Baccalaureate Core classes contribute heavily to an undergraduate student’s first foray into building the competency necessary to realize OSU’s Learning Goals for Graduates. A dedicated Director of Baccalaureate Core could contribute greatly to the conversations around curricular components of the First Year Experience and could liaison between the BCC and the important First Year Experience initiatives that will be on the table in the coming years.

We want to reiterate that we believe that ownership of the Baccalaureate Core should always reside with the faculty. Creating this position is not about offloading any existing responsibilities of the BCC, but rather enhancing our capacity to make informed and accurate decisions about our core curriculum. The BCC greatly appreciates your leadership and support of the Baccalaureate Core at OSU. We believe in its critical role in undergraduate education and feel strongly that having a Director of Baccalaureate Core will not only help OSU to maintain the developments and progress made the last three years but also stimulate innovation and shepherd the Baccalaureate Core to the next level of excellence.

cc: Bill Bogley, Stefani Dawn, Vicki Tolar Burton