

# Curriculum ~~Best~~ Practices

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Task Force Report

May 2017

# Task Force Members

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- *Manal Ahmidouch ('17)*
- Christy Buchanan (Psychology, Sr. Associate Dean)
- Sherri Clark (Anthropology)
- *Drew Finley ('19)*
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- *Joseph Ford ('18)*
- Stavroula Glezakos (Philosophy, Chair of Curriculum)
- Amanda Griffith (Economics)
- Anne Hardcastle (Spanish, Chair of CAP)
- Peter Kairoff (Music)
- Nina Lucas (Theatre/Dance)
- Sarah Raynor (Math and Stats)
- Jose' Villalba (Counselling, Sr. Associate Dean)
- Mark Welker (Chemistry)
- *Brian Hart ('16), Presidential Fellow*
- Michele Gillespie (History, Dean)

# Reasons for the Creation of the Task Force


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- Last formal review of college curriculum was 2006
- Prudent to ask how well our current curriculum serves our students
- Task Force charged with:
  - exploring the curricula of peer and aspirational universities which have undergone curricular restructuring in recent years
  - reflecting upon ways that our own curriculum might differ from, or be similar to, recent curricular innovations.

## A liberal arts education...

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*...provides students with broad knowledge and inquiry alongside in-depth study in a specific area of interest. To this end verbal and quantitative competence are crucial, but also historical, aesthetic, and linguistic competencies. A liberal arts education also helps students develop a sense of social responsibility and engagement. Ultimately, a liberal arts education facilitates how students see the world - intellectually, morally, spiritually, and physically - from a multi-dimensional standpoint while also acknowledging wider contexts, experiences, and perspectives.*



The Task Force assessed a wide spectrum of curricular models, from least to most proscriptive, reflecting an equally wide range of educational philosophies and goals...

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This presentation synthesizes the task force's investigations and discussions to offer useful context from which to consider the strengths and weaknesses of our own curriculum...

- **Divisionals, Areas of Knowledge and Modes of Inquiry**
- First Year Experience
- Diversity Requirement
- Quantitative Literacy Requirement
- Interdisciplinarity
- Capstone Experience

# Questions about Divisionals

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- Do our divisionals encourage students to take courses they would not otherwise take?
- Do our divisionals encourage the integration of knowledge? If not, where/when /how does that integration happen?
- How can we make sure that divisionals do not lose out to the interests of the majors?
- How do curriculum reviews/shifts change the way students decide which courses they take? What impact might a review have on different departments?
- Do we keep divisions (“areas of knowledge”) or move to “modes of inquiry” or incorporate a combination of the two?

# Structuring a Curriculum: *An Example*

## Areas of Knowledge and Modes of Inquiry

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Acquisition of knowledge of humanity, societies and cultures, and the physical and natural world

- Arts, Literatures, and Performance
- Civilizations
- Natural Sciences
- Quantitative Studies
- Social Sciences

Development of intellectual abilities, competencies, and skills

- Critical Thinking
- Analytical Reasoning
- Writing
- Quantitative Literacy
- Foreign Language and Transcultural Understanding
- Synthesis/Integration of Knowledge

Development of Personal and Social Responsibility

- Civic Engagement (Using Knowledge in the Service of Society)
- Ethical Reasoning
- Engaging Difference

## Current Practices among Peers Compared to WF Structural Challenge Looms Largest

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- WF divisionals/gen ed structure seems out of date with peer and aspirational schools
- Underlying issues with the divisionals/gen ed structure exist (i.e. WGS as Division 1 Debate)
- To prepare for SACS in an expeditious way we defended our divisions as a way of meeting our learning outcomes
- Can WF propose a new structure that begins with our learning outcomes?



# First Year Experience

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## Trends

- Many schools already have or are creating FY interdisciplinary courses
- FYS requirements in half the schools
- FYE rarer but an upward trend

## Questions

- How does our First-Year Experience pilot course fit into our curriculum?
- Do we need to revamp/revisit FYS from the Class of 2000? Can we make the FYS more truly interdisciplinary?
- Should we incorporate aspects of the FYS and FYE and leadership and character development into 1 FY course; make it two semesters of freshman year?

# Cultural Diversity Requirement

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## Trends

- Few clear national patterns on CDR
- Harvard, UVA, other top schools do not have explicit CDR courses, covered by modes of inquiry instead
- Most schools' CDR courses address either "plural societies" or "cultural competence," or have dual requirements addressing both.
- At some schools these dual requirements are more explicitly divided into a US diversity and a global culture requirement.

## Questions

- What benefits does a formal CDR serve?
- Is it possible for 1 or 2 courses to do everything we want/need a CDR to do?
- Should we create dedicated CDR courses?
- How should we evaluate CDR courses for appropriateness? What criteria do we need to ensure consistency over time?
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# Quantitative Literacy Requirement (QLR):

application of basic mathematics skills, such as algebra, to the analysis and interpretation of real-world quantitative information in the context of a discipline or interdisciplinary problem to draw conclusions that are relevant to students in their daily lives.

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## Trends

- Most schools make a distinction between a QLR and a Math/Science requirement
- Most schools have modes of inquiry that correspond to a QLR
- Many current QR classes @ WF do not *really* support quantitative literacy

## Questions

- What benefits does a formal QLR requirement serve?
- Should we create a dedicated QLR course or courses?
- If not, should we make changes to the courses that satisfy our QR?
- How should we evaluate QLR courses for appropriateness? What criteria do we need to ensure consistency over time?

# Interdisciplinarity

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## Trends

- Strong movement toward interdisciplinarity at all levels (FY, core, majors)
- Duke the most heavily interdisciplinary; UVA moving strongly in that direction
- Chicago's core is wholly interdisciplinary
- Emory's gen ed includes a shared learning experience for all students and expanded opportunities for creative and artistic production

## Questions

- Do we need more interdisciplinarity in our curriculum at Wake Forest?
- How can we better support our current interdisciplinarity?
- Do we want to encourage more students to develop their own interdisciplinary major?
- Do we want to encourage the offering of more interdisciplinary majors for students to choose from?

# Capstone Course

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## Trends

- Claremont McKenna requires a senior thesis.
- Pomona has a “Senior Exercise” requirement
- Duke proposed a “Mentored Scholarly Experience”
- William & Mary requires a capstone where all students must synthesize and apply critical analysis, solve problems, create original material, and communicate effectively with diverse audiences.

## Questions

- Is there value in providing capstone courses in all majors?
- Do we want more students to have a capstone experience?
- Do we need to establish key criteria for capstone courses?

# Lingering Questions...

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- Where and when in our curriculum are students asked to put the pieces together in order to better understand or solve important problems?
- Where and when are students encouraged to make links among their academic, personal, and community lives?
- Can we provide more opportunities for linking/integrating independent learning beyond the classroom, i.e. academic internships, study abroad, etc.?
- Should we consider curricular partnerships with WF Professional Schools? What if anything would our students and curriculum gain?
- Should there be a bigger role for undergraduate research broadly construed in any curriculum development?
- How would advising change to meet the needs of a revised curriculum?

# Conclusions of the Task Force

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- Our current divisionals/general ed structure deserves re-examination
- An ad hoc committee should be created to lead a curriculum review
- An ad hoc committee would use the research and recommendations of the Task Force as a starting point from which to lead a curriculum review
- An ad hoc committee would make recommendations to the Committee on Academic Planning

What are the faculty and student issues that an ad hoc committee charged with a curriculum review will need to consider?

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*Please discuss this question with your table. A task force member will help moderate and take notes. Be prepared to report out to the whole group.*