VANDERBILT
College of Arts *and* Science

The Future of the A&S CURRICULUM

FINAL REPORT

A&S College Core

(approved May 2023)

THE NEW A&S COLLEGE CORE:

A general education curriculum that is inviting, inspiring, and integrated.

Core courses introduce all students to the richness and power of an arts + science education.

Core Capacities develop key competencies across every academic division of the college.

Fulfilled with a minimum of 10 courses, the **A&S College Core** is less cumbersome but more intentional, flexible, and intuitive than AXLE—offering students common intellectual experiences, meaningful pathways through their education, and a compelling rationale for liberal arts study.

CORE CAPACITIES:

A. WRITTEN & CREATIVE EXPRESSION

cultivating expression that informs and inspires, whether on the page, stage, screen, or canvas

B. SYSTEMIC & STRUCTURAL THINKING

analyzing complex systems, whether molecules, formal theories, or societies

C. CULTURAL & INTERPRETIVE INVESTIGATION

deepening our understanding of cultures familiar and unfamiliar, past and present

D. DATA, INFORMATION & COMPUTATIONAL LITERACY

evaluating and employing varied kinds of evidence, from statistics to stories

E. ETHICAL & SOCIAL ENGAGEMENT

examining power, justice, and responsibility, in settings ranging from the classroom to the planet

Students complete the College Core by fulfilling a total of 16 Core Capacity requirements:

A. **Written & Creative Expression:** 4 tagged courses
B. **Systemic & Structural Thinking:** 3 tagged courses
C. **Cultural & Interpretive Investigation:** 3 tagged courses
D. **Data, Information & Computational Literacy:** 3 tagged courses
E. **Ethical & Social Engagement:** 3 tagged courses

Note: Courses may carry more than one Core Capacity tag.

FIRST-YEAR CORE

2 common writing seminars

Fulfilling 6 Core Capacities

FALL: CORE 1010 (class size: 15)
Meets Core Capacities **A**, **C**, and **E**

SPRING: CORE 1020 (class size: 15)
Meets Core Capacities **A**, **B**, and **D**

EXPLORATORY CORE

8 courses

Fullfilling 10 Core Capacities
(2 of each)

2 CORE 2000 courses after the first year, tagged with **2** Core Capacities

6 courses tagged with Core Capacities, including at least:

- **1 world language** course at second-semester proficiency or above
- **1 humanities** course, **1 social science** course, and **1 natural science** course with a **lab***

*The lab requirement is a placeholder for a redesigned requirement to be in place by Fall 2025.

Students can fulfill the College Core with a minimum of 33 credit hours, which includes the First-Year Core (2 four-hour courses) and the Exploratory Core (8 three-hour courses + 1 one-hour lab). Students who need to take English Composition (ENG 1100) and/or a first-semester world language course (1101-level) would have a minimum requirement of 36 or 39 hours.

FUTURE OF THE A&S CURRICULUM COMMITTEE
Final Report
April 24, 2023

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Back to top

Back to top

I. RATIONALE: WHY RETHINK OUR CURRICULUM?

In a sense, universities are continually reforming their curricula. Most of us no longer believe, as did Harvard College in 1642, that a college graduate must be proficient in Syriac, Aramaic, Greek, and Hebrew. Yale faculty in 1828 hotly debated whether their college ought to maintain a classical curriculum or admit "new-modelled" subjects. And elective courses were unknown to most U.S. undergraduates before the 1870s. But we need not reach back that far to appreciate that curricula are always on the move. Every time faculty members revise a syllabus, develop a new major or minor, or introduce new techniques in the classroom, we transform what and how we teach.

From time to time, however, universities and their faculties determine that a more thorough reconsideration is necessary. In the fall of 2021, motivated by a sense that our liberal arts requirement, AXLE (Achieving eXcellence in Liberal Education), was no longer serving our students and faculty as well as it might—and spurred by the upheaval of the COVID-19 pandemic—the College of Arts and Science charged the faculty to undertake such a review.

In January 2022, Sarah Igo, A&S dean of strategic initiatives, convened a steering committee and thirty A&S faculty members as the Future of the A&S Curriculum Committee. The only agenda was to evaluate the current state of the college's undergraduate curriculum and to propose any improvements. As we, the faculty, understood it, this entailed an examination of whether our existing curricular framework was in step with the best thinking in higher education, the evolution of our disciplines, the needs of our students, and the world they were preparing themselves to enter.

As the committee began its work, we took stock of what had changed—at our university, in our disciplines, in pedagogical techniques, in our student body, and in the world—since 2004, when AXLE was voted in. The changes struck us as dramatic, ranging from Vanderbilt's new residential college system; to a pronounced emphasis on cross- and transdisciplinary research; to growing recognition of the improved efficacy of teaching innovations such as flipped classrooms and alternative assessment techniques; to a more diverse and talented but also more stressed undergraduate population; to fresh concerns about disinformation, scientific literacy, racial violence, democratic and environmental instability, and technological disruption.

Our initial rationale for reimagining the curriculum was three-fold. We knew that the liberal arts were under pressure in public culture, and that our students likely needed us to make the case for the kind of education we offer in the College of Arts and Science. We suspected that developments reshaping our disciplines and the production of knowledge—along with complex challenges posed by the world our students were graduating into—might demand a more integrative and intentional curriculum. And we sensed that the college's current model of general education (the liberal education requirement) had become increasingly incoherent, both on its face and for the first-year students who were now arriving on our campus. We spell out each of these rationales in a bit more detail below.

Back to top

First, a broad and deep education in the arts and sciences is one of the best possible training grounds not just for the pursuit of knowledge but also for lives of sustained curiosity and purpose, whether as professionals, scholars, artists, activists, or citizens. Genuine exposure to varied modes of inquiry must therefore drive our liberal arts curriculum. Yet we cannot assume that the power of such an education is self-evident. We must ensure that our intellectual program makes a stirring appeal to an increasingly diverse and dynamic twenty-first-century student body—and that it is responsive to those students' needs and aspirations.

Second, a broadly conceived but also integrated education has never been more vital for our undergraduates, who face a host of complex and swiftly-evolving challenges. These range from emergent technologies such as artificial intelligence, to global crises such as climate change, to political dilemmas such as the fraying of democratic culture, to problems facing the university itself, including the fragile status of higher education and scholarly expertise in U.S. society. None of these challenges can be addressed by a single discipline or from a single vantage point. A strong liberal arts foundation will help students explore deep and difficult problems, but only if they know how to connect disparate methods, perspectives, and bodies of knowledge. In short, we must equip them with analytical, interpretive, and critical capacities that will enable them to decipher and shape the world they will encounter as Vanderbilt graduates—a world that has vastly changed in the two decades since our undergraduate curriculum was last revised.

Third, we identified a lack of coherence in the way we organize general education in the college through our existing menu-like distribution system of requirements.[1] Indeed, part of the challenge at Vanderbilt, fostered by our collective experience with AXLE, is that our faculty do not have a habit of thinking or talking about "general education" at all—as something distinct from what happens in majors, minors, and advanced electives. We have an opportunity in revising the curriculum to restore a space in students' course of study that is deliberately foundational as well as far-ranging.

Beyond this, several deficiencies of AXLE have consistently been voiced by students, faculty, and academic advisors alike. These include confusing and inflexible designations (which students regularly describe as "random"); divisional classifications that no longer map well onto current scholarly configurations and interdisciplinary thinking; overly bulky requirements; and the uneven burdens those requirements pose for certain fields and majors, prompting a good

[1] AXLE organizes general education through a distribution system, the dominant mode for ordering U.S. college curricula since the mid-twentieth century. In such systems, undergraduates study one subject in depth (their major) and "sample" other disciplines by taking departmental courses. In core models, on the other hand, all or most general education courses are housed outside the departments. See "The Problem of General Education," in Louis Menand, *The Marketplace of Ideas* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2010), pp. 23-57. For a short history of the development of undergraduate education in the U.S., see Andrew Delbanco, *College: What It Was, Is, and Should Be* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2012).

Back to top

number of our students every semester—263 of them in Fall 2022 alone—to exit A&S altogether.[2]

Even more importantly, AXLE—contrary to its intention—has been susceptible to a "check-list" mentality, encouraging too little true exploration. As one student acknowledged, the liberal arts requirement is "trying to get students out of their comfort zone…however AXLE has a stigma that makes it more of a chore than exciting." Moreover, our undergraduate program has failed to create clear pathways leading from our general liberal arts requirements to the pressing questions and areas of specialized study that our students hope to pursue.

As we began to gather data and hold meetings with various parties about AXLE (see Appendix XII, Engagement and Outreach Efforts), it became apparent that there were features of our existing program that militate against intellectual curiosity and risk-taking. Our curricular design was not encouraging enough students to venture into new topics, questions, and fields. Instead, one of our surveys revealed, even for first- and second-year students, the top priority in selecting classes is checking off major requirements—followed closely by the convenience of the class meeting time. Motivations like pure curiosity, trying out a new subject, or taking a class because a peer recommended it (or because a particular professor was teaching it, alas!), fell much lower on the list.[3] First-year students to a greater degree *did* select classes to meet the AXLE requirement, and so ostensibly were exploring new areas. But the way students spoke about AXLE made evident that for many of them the goal is to clear out the liberal arts requirement as efficiently as possible in order to pursue a predetermined path. Our advising and registration systems, but also our curricular design, do not push back very hard on these patterns.

More broadly, it became clear that what our undergraduate program lacks is a genuine invitation to the liberal arts—a compelling rationale linking the college's diverse offerings. Many students told us so directly. As a *Hustler* editorialist put it, "Simply providing a list of courses that satisfy a few boxes of requirements is not a liberal arts education.…Rather than forcing students to simply learn material from different fields, AXLE needs to teach students how to think across disciplines. However, without institutional efforts…it is hard for students to connect the dots."[4]

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[2] See Vanderbilt Intra-University Transfer data, retrieved March 14, 2023 (Appendix XII, IUT Survey). Responding to the committee's Fall 2022 survey about why they or their friends chose another school at Vanderbilt over A&S, a full 60% of our student sample reported that "AXLE is too hard to fulfill." This is a widespread perception. In qualitative responses, students' number-one complaint about AXLE was the cumbersome number of requirements, describing this as a deterrent to study in the college (40%). This was followed by complaints about AXLE's inflexibility (22%) and the fact the requirements could be difficult or confusing to navigate (17%). Fifteen percent agreed that AXLE was "unengaging." AXLE Survey, November 2022 (see Appendix XII, AXLE Survey).

[3] See Appendix XII, Course Selection Survey.

[4] Sophia Liu, "AXLE is Not AXLE Enough," Vanderbilt *Hustler*, January 4, 2020; Link.

Back to top

We concur. The committee's goal soon became: building an *inspiring, integrated,* and *evolving* program of study for students in the College of Arts & Science.

Back to top

II. PROCESS AND PRINCIPLES

Committee Process

Several key decisions about process guided the committee's work.

First, the revision of the curriculum would be **led by our faculty**, beginning with the composition of the Future of the A&S Curriculum Committee. Sarah Igo (History), dean of strategic initiatives, reached out to chairs and directors, the Center for Teaching, and colleagues at large for nominations to the committee. A diverse committee of 30 faculty—of all ranks (11 continuing-track and 19 tenure-stream) and representing nearly every department and program in the college—was assembled based on those nominations (see Appendix XII, Committee Membership). Members of the committee agreed to serve for a full three semesters. A small steering committee was also constituted to keep track of the committee's work, chaired by Igo and including Derek Bruff (Mathematics; then-director of the Center for Teaching), Amy Johnson (American Studies; Latin American, Caribbean and Latinx Studies; assistant provost for experiential education and undergraduate affairs), and Lutz Koepnick (German and East European Studies, Cinema and Media Arts); Cynthia Brame (Biological Sciences; past associate director of the CFT) joined the steering committee when Bruff departed from the university. Danny Coradazzi in the Dean's Office acted as the administrative coordinator for the group and Mario Rewers (Public Policy; American Studies) as research associate.

Second, our proposals would be **grounded in research,** starting with a bibliographic review of writings in higher education across the last decade. We created a research library for the faculty working groups, examined pedagogical studies on high-impact practices, and investigated a host of alternative curricular models. We also needed to get the finest possible sense of how our own liberal education requirement was working—and not working—for students and faculty. This we accomplished by gathering institutional data on matters from intra-university transfers to our current writing requirement. We also designed our own surveys: of students on questions ranging from how they choose their courses to what aspects of AXLE they find most and least valuable (see Appendix XII, Surveys) and of faculty on our emerging curricular designs. These data-gathering exercises were supplemented with frequent and far-reaching conversations with different constituencies on campus.

The committee drew on local expertise, especially that of our Peabody colleagues and the Center for Teaching. Members of the steering committee also attended several national conferences on core curriculum design and general education assessment and made site visits to Purdue and Stanford to learn from their recent experiences revising their undergraduate programs. The committee consulted as well with a number of external specialists in curricular and institutional reform, including Parna Sengupta and Daniel Edelstein (Director and Faculty Director, Stanford Introductory Studies, Stanford University), Loni Bordoloi Pazich (Program Director for Institutional Initiatives, Teagle Foundation), Traci Williams (Executive Director, Institutional Effectiveness,

Back to top

Research, and Planning, Chattanooga State), Paul Hanstedt (Director of the Houston H. Harte Center for Teaching and Learning, Washington and Lee University), and Roosevelt Montás (former Director of the Center for the Core Curriculum, Columbia College).

Third, and related, we would rely on **extensive outreach and consultation**, seeking out parties with insight into the undergraduate curriculum, via regular open houses and updates to the A&S Faculty, the Faculty Council, and the A&S Chairs and Directors. This consultation included current students—whom we surveyed, invited to all-campus open houses and talks, and met with regularly via an ad hoc student advisory committee. This was not because the committee felt beholden to "what students want" but because we knew that our students have a very different vantage point on the curriculum than do the faculty; because they could perceive ramifications of different designs that might not be apparent to faculty members; and because, as we discovered time and time again, they care deeply about their own education. Our work was much improved by their willingness to test and discuss potential curricular designs, and we here want to thank them for their time and many contributions to the committee's thinking.

We knew that we needed as well to get a clear picture of the workings of the current undergraduate program from CASPAR advisors; Faculty Heads in the Commons and the Residential Colleges; Directors of Undergraduate Studies in our three divisions; the Writing Center, Central Library, and Career Center staffs; the Vanderbilt Center for Languages; the Immersion Office; the Student Care Network, University Counseling Center, and Center for Student Wellbeing; the Office of the University Registrar; the Office of Academic Program Review, Assessment & Accreditation; the deans and undergraduate associate deans of Blair, Engineering, and Peabody; and many other corners of the university. For a list of our outreach events and meetings, see Appendix XII, Engagement and Outreach Efforts.

Guiding Principles

The steering committee launched the curriculum effort with several guiding principles beyond the procedural ones above. We would:

- Keep the focus on our undergraduates and what they most need from an A&S education
- Design a framework that deliberately promotes diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging
- Consider no element of our undergraduate curriculum to be fixed or settled

As we launched the faculty working groups and began learning from our colleagues about the task at hand, this list expanded. Far-ranging reading, research, and discussion led us to a concrete set of aspirations for a new curriculum. We hoped it could, in addition:

- Foster exploration and discovery from the moment students arrived on campus
- Enunciate a clear, compelling, and logical rationale for an A&S education
- Focus on key competencies developed over time, and across every college division
- Help students perceive and integrate different facets of their learning
- Create a common intellectual experience in the first year of study

Back to top

- Provide opportunities for students to reflect on the meaning of their education
- Allow for experiments, dynamism, and change in its very structure
- Streamline and simplify how students navigated general education requirements

The proposal that the thirty-six of us developed—in a total of ninety-seven meetings over three semesters—flow directly from these commitments and principles.

The Future of the A&S Curriculum Committee is delighted to recommend for the faculty's consideration a new A&S College Core. We do so confident that this new curriculum will extend our students' capacities for genuine exploration and discovery during their time with us on campus and far beyond it, in their lives as Vanderbilt graduates.

Back to top

III. OVERVIEW OF THE PROPOSAL

Our proposal recommends the dissolution of AXLE and the implementation of two major reforms:

I. **Core Capacities** to guide students' learning and exploration across the curriculum:

- Written & Creative Expression
- Systemic & Structural Thinking
- Cultural & Interpretive Investigation
- Data, Information & Computational Literacy
- Ethical & Social Engagement

II. **A College Core**:

First-Year Core

- 2 common writing seminars in fall and spring introducing the Core Capacities

Exploratory Core

- 2 "Big Question" courses for students beyond the first year
- 6 additional courses keyed to the Core Capacities
  (including language, lab, and divisional requirements)

A full explanation of our rationale for these reforms follows. For a more detailed version of the proposal itself, see Section VIII.

Please note that while the Spring 2023 faculty vote pertains to just the two reforms above, the committee has developed a number of other recommendations that it would like to place before the faculty. These can be found in IX. Additional Committee Recommendations and X. Areas in Need of Further Study and Development.

Back to top

IV. A CLOSE LOOK AT THE CORE

Why a Core?

Why adopt a core curriculum for general education in the College of Arts & Science at Vanderbilt? The benefits of a core like the one we are proposing are at once pedagogical, intellectual, and social. **Pedagogically**, the First-Year Core allows for greater coordination and collaboration among faculty in teaching our undergraduates. It enables instructors to scaffold crucial competencies like writing and data literacy in an intentional way across the first year. It allows for an introduction to the rules of academic engagement and disagreement, something both students and faculty say they need. It enables us to pay consistent attention to issues surrounding the transition to college—questions of stress, wellness, grade anxiety, and the like. And it seeks to address equity issues through demonstrated high-impact practices, aiming to ensure that our diverse student body enters A&S on the same footing and that all students gain access to important skills for navigating new academic terrain.

Faculty, whether they choose to teach in the Core or not, will benefit from the fact that students entering their classes after the first year will have had two semesters of college-level writing instruction in addition to a foundation in capacities that are crucial to their development as scholars and thinkers. Our undergraduates should be able to do better and deeper work in all of their other classes with the First-Year Core as a foundation.

Intellectually, a First-Year Core, followed by what we are calling the Exploratory Core, is intended to open up new and compelling questions for incoming students, regardless of their background, academic interests, or future plans. Many of our students arrive at Vanderbilt with decided, but not always well-formulated, notions about the majors and career paths they plan to pursue. They also arrive without many tools at their disposal to navigate a dizzying array of course options (and academic fields) quite unlike what was available to them in high school. As higher education scholars have noted, this can be daunting for anyone, but especially for first-generation or under-resourced students. “The character of college course consideration is fateful,” concludes one study. “Too wide a range of options can be overwhelming to students, especially when they can access only minimal information and advice for navigating complex curriculums...Too narrow a range can limit academic options later in college in ways that can be hard for students to recognize early on.”[5] The Core aims to help our students make informed decisions in a structured way—both by giving them space to reflect on their studies and by deliberately introducing them to readings, questions, problems, and faculty mentors in many different fields.

The new first-year sequence, by deliberately educating students about the range and richness of academic possibilities at a university like ours, will be a true invitation to college study. The

[5] Sorathan Chaturapruek et al., “Studying Undergraduate Course Consideration at Scale,” *AERA* (American Education Research Association) *Open* 7: 1 (2021): 1.

Back to top

"Big Question" courses, which highlight the many different disciplinary points of entry into a problem, are proposed in the same spirit. We hope the new structure of the curriculum will make intellectual exploration and discovery—and not simply navigating requirements or building a resumé—a keynote of A&S undergraduates' early academic experience. We expect it to change campus culture as well. One data point that stood out to our committee was a survey of first-year students enrolled in one of Stanford's new common courses. When asked whether they discussed the course ideas and readings with other students outside of class, more than a third (37%) reported doing so "a lot" and another 31% a "moderate" amount.[6] If our First-Year Core has results like these, intellectual life on campus—in our classrooms but also our dining halls and residences—will be much the richer.

Socially, a core model promotes a sense of community for both faculty and students. Working across the natural sciences, social sciences, and humanities, faculty will collaborate on course design, reading selection, and teaching practices. Likewise, shared readings and assignments can be a powerful way to create an intellectual commons for our students paralleling our residential Commons—fostering a deeper sense of belonging to a cohort. Importantly, our First-Year Core gives each new student two opportunities to sit in small seminars and to get to know a faculty member well. This increases students' chances of receiving good mentoring and access to campus resources that they might not otherwise encounter. Finally, students are in a position to offer and receive stronger peer support, given that they will be grappling with similar materials and assignments in the first-year sequence.

Across the country, a good number of universities have moved to a core model like the one we are proposing, and the results have been impressive. Faculty and students report high levels of satisfaction with this kind of common teaching and learning, and they profess a strong sense of community inside and outside the classroom. The Teagle Foundation, through its Cornerstone Program, regularly funds core-based curricular revision efforts at colleges and universities based on how successful this model has proven. Scholars of general education also endorse the benefits of a core model. Indeed, there has been a discernible national shift in recent years away from distribution system models like AXLE and toward core curriculum models, especially for the first year of study.[7]

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[6] "Why College? Fall 2021 (Year 2) Pilot Evaluation Study," Stanford Vice Provost for Undergraduate Education (May 2022); we thank our Stanford colleagues for sharing this report with us.

[7] Data from a series of studies conducted by the AAC&U and Hart Research Associates in 2009, 2015, and 2018 indicate a clear shift underway in higher education away from "Distribution Models" such as AXLE and toward "integrative Models." Distribution models require students to choose a certain number of courses based on division (e.g., Social Science, Arts and Humanities, Math, Natural Science, Foreign Language, Physical Education). Integrative Models include features like a common core, learning communities, interdisciplinary courses, integrative courses, team-taught courses, capstone courses, campus-wide themes, ePortfolios, and service learning. For the most recent of these reports see: https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED582012.pdf.

Back to top

The proposed A&S Core will have two parts—the First-Year Core and the Exploratory Core. Through this program, we will invite students from the very moment they arrive on campus to be deliberate, curious, and self-reflective in their pursuit of knowledge. Offering a common intellectual experience during the first year and integrative approaches to complex problems in subsequent years, the proposed Core will lay the foundation for meaningful inquiry across the many fields of arts and science that our students will pursue in their time at Vanderbilt.

The First Year Core: Structure and Staffing

The First-Year Core will be taught as two 4-hour courses in a fall-spring sequence with a shared pedagogical framework and common readings and assignments. The fall course is currently titled "Being Human, Encountering Others." In this iteration it will open up questions about human solidarity (with particular collectivities, communities, or nations), hierarchy, and difference, and of the very boundaries of "the human." The second course, currently titled "Science, Technology, Values," will explore the workings of science and the complex social, ethical, and political responsibilities of pursuing scientific research and technological innovation. We piloted one section of each First-Year Core course in the spring of 2023 with great success. In Fall 2023 we are offering 21 pilot sections of the proposed First-Year Core courses with the goal of fully implementing the program as early as Fall 2024 for all incoming students (see "Pilot Program" below).

Structure

The First-Year Core courses will be seminar-style, discussion-based courses. The evidence for the benefits of this kind of small-seminar instruction, especially in the first year of college, is overwhelming.[8] These courses will help students transition to college thinking, grapple with important issues that span disciplines, learn crucial writing skills through scaffolded assignments, and participate in discussions that will continue outside of the classroom. The Core will also be a place for students to pause and examine their expectations for college: what they hope to learn and what possibilities await them in a university community. As our late colleague, Mark Wollaeger of the English Department, urged: "all first-year students…regardless of imagined career path, should be encouraged to reflect on life choices,

[8] Jennifer R. Keup and Dallin George Young describe the first-year seminar as "one of the most long-standing and widespread interventions for the success of first-year students in colleges and universities in the United States" in "Investigating the First-Year Seminar as a High-Impact Practice," *The First Year of College: Research Theory, and Practice on Improving the Student Experience and Increasing Retention*, ed. Robert S. Feldman (Cambridge University Press, 2017), p. 93. See also Deborah E. Bordelon, Colleen Sexton, and Ann Vendrely, "Designing for Students: Creating a Robust Interdisciplinary First Year Course," *Journal of the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning* 19:1 (February 2019): 66-79; Eberly Center for Teaching Excellence, "Best Practices for Teaching First-Year Undergraduates: Strategies from Experienced Faculty, Carnegie Mellon University, 2002.

Back to top

and how higher education may inform those choices."[9] We could not agree more. Having students begin their A&S education in the Core, where the purpose and meaning of their education will be an early theme, is an attempt to slow their rush toward a particular academic path or major.

To facilitate a common intellectual experience across the first-year class, the courses will share a common syllabus, which will be developed, refined, and revised collaboratively by the faculty teaching in the Core. Importantly, the shared syllabus is not meant to impose upon faculty nor to dictate a "canon" to students. Rather, the texts in the common syllabus are best thought of as "pretexts"—that is, artifacts chosen to elicit thought-provoking, open-ended discussion in the classroom.

In addition, the First-Year Core will provide students with consistent instruction in college-level writing with the guidance of the Writing Center and additional faculty experts. We know that many of our current First-Year Writing Seminars currently do this well. Stretching the first-year writing requirement across two semesters doubles down on this foundational competency. The writing program will include the skills currently emphasized in First Year Writing Seminars, but assignments will be coordinated across sections and scaffolded across semesters, allowing for more intensive training. Moreover, by ensuring that all Core faculty have ongoing support for teaching writing, we hope to remedy a common complaint of students about the uneven attention to and quality of writing instruction in both our First-Year Writing Seminars and "W" classes.

Taken together, the First-Year Core will familiarize students with each capacity that is part of the new Core curriculum. While both first-year courses will focus on writing, the fall course will also introduce students to Cultural & Interpretive Investigation and Ethical & Social Engagement; the spring course will introduce them to Systemic & Structural Thinking and Data, Information & Computational Literacy. Library staff, for example, are currently working with us to develop modules in research methods and data literacy to be used in the Core.

As 4-credit courses, the first-year sequence will help students transition to college-level academic expectations at Vanderbilt through required one-on-one meetings and revision sessions with faculty, extended office hours, and drop-in sessions with other Core instructors. The latter feature is intended to help students forge early relationships with faculty in their potential areas of academic interest and get a glimpse of the work of different disciplines. In this way, the Core can serve as a gateway not just to the home department of a student's particular instructors but to a variety of academic fields. We see advantages here for academic advising more generally. Core instructors will serve as early mentors for students, introducing them to crucial on-campus resources—for instance, the Writing Studio, the Library, the Undergraduate Counseling Center, and the Career Center. Students and faculty will also participate in co-curricular programs—art exhibits, live performances, visiting speakers—tied to

[9] Mark Wollaeger, "Teaching Literary Value," *PMLA* 138: 1 (2023), p. 200.

Back to top

the themes and questions of the First-Year Core. These aspects of the Core will be a complement to, not a replacement for, Vanderbilt Visions.

An important additional benefit of the extra course hour each semester is that it should result in more of our first-year students enrolling in just four courses a semester—a recommendation that has very strong support among A&S faculty, Commons Faculty Heads, many students, the college advising office (CASPAR), and our committee. Four courses a semester in the first year is in fact what CASPAR counsels for our students, but that recommendation is only currently followed by about half the class. As the advising office has suggested to us, the fourth hour can also serve as a buffer when students need to drop a course in the first year, meaning that fewer will end up on academic probation for falling under the required twelve credit hours.

Note: our committee recommends that transfer students, whether entering A&S from other Vanderbilt schools or elsewhere, not be required to enroll in the First-Year Core. The rationale for this is that: (i) transfer students will have already experienced a transition to college, and in some cases, may have taken similar first-year seminars/courses at another institution; (ii) enrolling in the First-Year Core may make it more difficult for transfer students to fulfill their other requirements for graduation; and (iii) the First-Year Core is meant to build community among first-year students (among other things) and so would be less appropriate for sophomores and juniors. (Transfer students will however be required to take two "Big Question" Core courses.)

Staffing

With approximately 1,050 first-year students entering the College of Arts and Science each year and a cap of 15 students per section, we will need to offer approximately 70 sections of each first-year course annually. Between those currently offering First Year Writing Seminars (drawn from a good number of A&S departments) who may opt to teach in the Core; new postdoctoral fellows in our Collaborative Humanities program (ca. 10-15 per year); new continuing-track and tenure-track hires; and other interested humanities, social science, and natural science faculty, we are confident that we possess the teaching strength needed to staff the first-year courses. Indeed, a sizable group of current faculty have expressed interest already. Out of 256 responses from 33 departments surveyed during Spring 2023 (approximately 40% of our faculty), 106 faculty members (41%) indicated that they would be interested in teaching in the First-Year Core (see Appendix XII, Program and Department Survey).

These numbers are backed up by the enthusiastic response midway through the Spring 2023 semester to a call for volunteers to teach in a pilot of the first-year courses in Fall 2023. We had originally intended to run five sections of each First-Year Core course but had so much interest that we ended up creating 21 sections (two observers will regularly sit in as well to evaluate how the classes are working)—and still had to turn a number of interested faculty members away.

Back to top

Twenty-one sections of these first-year courses in Fall 2023 amounts to roughly 15% of the first-year class. To prepare for the pilot, we scheduled a series of syllabus-setting meetings for instructors in March and April ahead of a May training and preparatory workshop, where we will focus on strategies for teaching our chosen texts as well as best practices around writing instruction and small seminar discussion. Simultaneously, we will be creating a faculty interest databank and soliciting additional instructors to teach in the program during 2023-24 so as to be able to fully staff the first-year sequence in 2024-25.

Faculty and postdocs teaching in the First-Year Core will be supported by a yearly pedagogy and planning workshop in the spring; small faculty learning communities during the semester that they teach in the Core; and a $5,000 stipend. To coordinate 70 sections of the common course, faculty teaching in the Core will participate in a faculty learning community and be organized into small groups or "pods" of 10 each. Each pod will have a weekly course meeting to discuss what they are doing in their sections and how to prepare for the coming week. This will allow for pedagogical support, the exchange of ideas, and the real-time development of best practices for running these courses (see Section VI, Curriculum Oversight and Support for details).

As importantly, these pods will create a community of Core instructors that spans ranks and disciplines. This should have particular benefits for our postdoctoral fellows, who will gain valuable teaching experience as well as an instant network of faculty colleagues. Other universities that have a core teaching model such as the one we are proposing report that faculty gain as much from participating in teaching from a common syllabus as do students. At Vanderbilt, we have already heard from dozens of faculty members about their interest in participating in the Core because, among other things, it will connect them with a new faculty community on campus.

Exploratory Core: Structure and Staffing

Structure

The second piece of our Core curriculum is the Exploratory Core, which includes departmental courses tagged with Core Capacities (more on this in Section V below) as well as a cluster of "Big Question" courses. The latter would be offered outside of traditional departments and be especially designed for the second and third year of study. Appealing to students with diverse academic interests, the courses could be on just about any topic, from the quest for the 'good life,' to the limits of citizenship and sovereignty, to the ethics of artificial intelligence, to the interplay of art and social justice. Some of these courses might focus explicitly on how different disciplines consider problems under headers such as "numbers and narratives," "cultures of proof and evidence," "neuroscience and design," and "histories of the universe." Others still might take a multi-angled approach to pressing contemporary debates, whether over reproductive rights, policing, or climate policy.

Back to top

The point of marking out a place for "Big Question" courses in the curriculum is to model exploratory, integrative, problem-based inquiry. These courses will give students opportunities to jump into highly challenging questions and topics—what higher education scholars refer to as "wicked problems" or, in another framing, "'ill-structured problems'...that elude single clear-cut answers and contain solutions not immediately evident."[10] They will also offer students broad choice in the topics they study while still taking courses connected to the Core, which allows for coordination in other aspects of general education (the Core Capacities).

These integrative courses will be offered under a non-departmental header (e.g., "CORE"). Many will be team-taught. They will be proposed by faculty and supported by course development grants, with their syllabi, rationale, assignments, and readings made available in a shared repository for all faculty. As we envision them, these Exploratory Core courses will also intentionally build on the First-Year Core, calling on some of the readings, assignments, and capacities that students already share.

Note: Due to different registration timelines in the undergraduate schools and colleges, Exploratory Core classes will be limited to A&S students until all rising A&S second- and third-year students are registered for courses.

Staffing

Rather than mandate a particular size or structure for the Big Question classes, we will encourage faculty to propose a variety of different kinds of courses, ranging in size from 25 to 80 students. We currently project needing to offer 20 such classes per semester, involving something on the order of 65 faculty for 40 classes total. These courses will be both easier and harder to staff than the first-year sequence. Easier because faculty will often be adapting texts, concepts, and assignments that they may already teach. More difficult because we expect a good proportion of these courses to be team-taught, which will necessitate new forms of collaboration and more faculty strength per class.

In our visits to departments and discussions with faculty colleagues, it is clear that some who are not interested in participating in the First-Year Core are quite eager to teach in these Exploratory Core courses. Surveys conducted during Spring 2023 bear this out. Out of 256 responses from 33 departments (again, approximately 40% of our faculty), 142 respondents (55%) indicated that they would be interested in teaching in an integrative or interdisciplinary Core course (see Appendix XII, Program and Department Survey). Part of the appeal is the prospect of team-teaching; another part is that instructors in such courses will remain firmly within their areas of expertise. Some faculty have already developed model courses of this kind via various initiatives afoot on campus and would like the opportunity to teach more.

[10] Paul Hanstedt, *Creating Wicked Students: Designing Courses for a Complex World* (Sterling, VA: Stylus Publishing, 2018)*;* Jeremy T. Murphy and Meira Levinson, *Instructional Moves for Powerful Teaching in Higher Education* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard Education Press, 2023), introduction.

Back to top

To fully staff 40 such courses a year we will need to work with the departments and the Dean's Office to minimize conflicts, real and perceived, between departmental and college teaching. There will also need to be explicit encouragement for team-teaching (treated as a full course for each participating faculty member) in the program. Given current enrollments—as well as under-enrollment in some areas—we believe that staffing the "Big Question" courses is feasible with strong departmental support. More generally, our new Core will need to factor into future tenure-track and continuing-track hiring plans, and will require a reorientation of recruitment practices beyond established departmental and major/minor needs to include Core teaching.

Pilot Program

Below are the working descriptions of the pilot courses for the first-year sequence. The two halves of the sequence will be taught concurrently in Fall 2023 so that we may gather as much feedback as possible to inform a potential Fall 2024 rollout of the new curriculum.

Being Human, Encountering Others (Fall):
This course invites you to launch your undergraduate career with the biggest of questions: who are we, and why are we here? To begin, we will ask: why are we here at Vanderbilt, and what is the purpose of a college education? We will then examine the varied ways that people in different times, places, and circumstances have contemplated the meaning of humanity—questions of social flourishing and responsibility; of solidarity (with particular collectivities, communities, or nations), hierarchy, and difference; and of the very boundaries of "the human." We will consult the writing of poets and philosophers, neuroscientists and economists, to understand how these questions have shaped and will continue to shape our collective existence.

Science, Technology, Values (Spring):
In this course we will explore what it means to live, and perhaps flourish, in a scientific and technological civilization. Starting with ancient modes of science and ending in the modern global era, we will engage with the human thirst for understanding and discovery, charting the benefits and dangers of the innovations that have led to our emergence as technologically dominant creatures on this planet. Can we determine if our advances have made life better—for us, or for the world we inhabit? What information would be required to answer such a question? We will draw on scholarship from the natural sciences, social sciences, and humanities to consider the powerful but ambiguous roles played by science and technology in shaping the human condition.

First iterations of the two First-Year Core courses were piloted in Spring 2023 through the Honors program. In a survey of the current Core pilot students, 86% (19/22) agreed that "a majority of first-year students would benefit from the course." Sixty-three per cent (14/22) indicated that their class discussions have carried over into non-classroom discussions with peers; the same number said that they "could imagine students discussing course content" in

Back to top

non-classroom settings. Two separate first-year international students additionally described the course as one that helped them understand how to participate in a U.S. college seminar. This is an admittedly small and unrepresentative sample, of course—and cannot speak to the cohort effects of sharing questions, readings, and ideas across the entire first-year class.

Nevertheless, the course design seems to be working very well for students. One noted, “I love how we have the freedom to incorporate the big ideas tackled in these courses into our own niches and interests.” Another said, “the discussions…are performed in a less structured way than other classes I’ve taken—our discussions have been richer and more diverse as a result.” One added, “I really like the diversity of readings because I wouldn’t normally come across some of these texts otherwise, especially being a STEM major.” Still another commented, “This class has much more of a welcoming environment for disagreement across a wide range of intellectual issues….everyone feels compelled to contribute and question ideas in a way that is fairly unique compared to other courses.” Finally, one student, a senior, opined: “This is so radically better than the current AXLE setup that words fail me. In my four years, this is the first time that I felt fully immersed in an authentically intellectual environment. The discussion is meaningful, intersectional, and forces me to articulate my beliefs in a way I think first years would benefit from greatly.”

The pilot courses for Fall 2023 will feature significant changes from their first drafts. That is fully what we expected, and what we continue to expect of the First-Year Core going forward. These courses will undergo constant assessment and revision, as both faculty and students weigh in on what is working well and what needs correction. The courses will also shift based on the changing needs and interests of faculty and students, keeping them fresh and lively for both. After each semester, faculty teaching in the Core will collaboratively decide what course material should stay and what should be replaced. We anticipate that the titles and themes of the courses will also be revised and rethought over time.

Back to top

V. A CLOSE LOOK AT THE CAPACITIES

Why Capacities?

We propose that A&S move from a distribution model, where students select a set number of courses in different disciplinary or divisional categories, to a competency-based, or "capacities" model. We further suggest that students navigate the curriculum by developing these capacities—helping to clarify what constitutes a truly general education in the College of Arts and Science.

In our proposal, five Core Capacities—Written & Creative Expression, Systemic & Structural Thinking, Cultural & Interpretive Investigation, Data, Information & Computational Literacy, and Ethical & Social Engagement—will anchor an A&S education. Each of these capacities is critically important; and each is taught in all the college divisions. By organizing the curriculum through capacities rather than divisional requirements (e.g., Social and Behavioral Sciences or Humanities and the Creative Arts) we will dispense with what many students see as a menu of disconnected courses and instead offer an integrated approach to liberal arts learning.

This new way of navigating general education in A&S emphasizes intellectual exploration and the development of foundational competencies. Introduced in the First-Year Core, the five Core Capacities will be woven through and practiced across the curriculum during students' early years at Vanderbilt. Students will then build on these foundations as they move into more advanced, concentrated study. The overall goal is not only to clarify for students *what* they are learning—but that they can and should *carry* that learning from one course into another, and into their majors and minors as well. In this way, the Core Capacities provide a coherence to students' academic life at Vanderbilt that our curriculum currently lacks.

Unlike AXLE, courses could be tagged with more than one Core Capacity (although no more than two, except in the First-Year Core). This allows more flexibility in how students fulfill the requirement and also seems to match how most faculty think about what transpires in their classes. Another difference from AXLE is that not all courses would automatically be tagged with capacities. Courses counting toward the Core Capacities would be broadly introductory, keyed to specific learning goals, and accessible to non-majors. Along with the "Big Question" courses, they would form the Exploratory Core: our proposed foundation for an education in the liberal arts. But they would not be the whole of that education. In our framework, courses in the Core Capacities aim for breadth and general competencies, complementing the depth and specialized skills that students will gain through coursework in their chosen disciplines.

Discussions with students suggest that these capacities are much more legible to undergraduates than are divisional requirements. Note here that 68% of the undergraduates in our Fall 2022 survey cited AXLE requirements that "they do not think they will need/use" as a reason for choosing another Vanderbilt school over A&S (see AXLE Survey). Our hope is that the capacities approach will enable our students to forge meaningful connections among disparate fields of knowledge—

Back to top

and perhaps even between what they learn in class and their post-college lives. In the shorter term, they may better grasp what an introductory ethics course (Philosophy) and a seminar in experimental design (Psychology) have in common when both are tagged with the Ethical & Social Engagement capacity.

Descriptions and Learning Outcomes

The framing of the Core Capacities was a lengthy and iterative process that drew on extensive institutional research and benchmarking, discussion with colleagues in all A&S departments, and the work of our Learning Outcomes Subcommittee. We recognize that these capacities will likely need to be rethought and renewed at regular intervals, and propose initial reviews of how well the categories and the tagging process are working at two and four years after the new curriculum's implementation.

Titles, short descriptions, and learning outcomes for each of the Core Capacities follow.

A: WRITTEN & CREATIVE EXPRESSION
cultivating expression that informs and inspires, whether on the page, stage, screen, or canvas

Effective use of written language is essential for thinking precisely, for building bridges across existing divides, and for conceiving alternative futures. To communicate confidently and creatively, we must be able to present ideas clearly, and to adjust our modes and registers of expression for different audiences. Because skillful writing matters as never before in an age of computer-assisted text production, these courses center the written word but also invite students to experiment with media such as the diagram, the podcast, and the paintbrush—all powerful tools to communicate within and about our world.

Learning Outcomes:

1. Use of clear, organized, proficient language to express ideas in written or spoken form.
2. Use appropriate evidence or materials to create an argument and persuade an audience.
3. Use of imagination to provide insight in a unique work.

B: SYSTEMIC & STRUCTURAL THINKING
analyzing complex systems, whether molecules, formal theories, or societies

The natural and social world is made up of interacting systems, where any individual component is influenced by multiple forces and, in turn, influences many others. To grasp problems and opportunities in this complex environment, we must be able to analyze intricate relationships, consider possible ramifications of change, and predict the outcome of specific interventions. Whether considering cellular events involved in carcinogenesis, traffic patterns that affect daily carbon release, or social systems that produce structural racism, these courses equip students to tackle highly challenging problems.

Back to top

Learning Outcomes:

1. Form a hypothesis or thesis about important problems or solutions.
2. Employ diverse approaches to address problems with critical reasoning.
3. Integrate alternative, divergent, or contradictory perspectives.
4. Predict potential effects of changes to a system.

C: CULTURAL & INTERPRETIVE INVESTIGATION

deepening our understanding of cultures familiar and unfamiliar, past and present

A wealth of languages, values, histories, and traditions make up the human record—shaping the experiences of individuals and groups, the artifacts and archives they create, and the configuration of our global present. To navigate this variegated landscape, we must read, listen, and observe closely, locate our own assumptions, and attend to the settings in which knowledge is produced. Whether concerned with ancient architecture or modern languages, the transnational migrations of people or of ideas, these courses prepare students to approach cultural differences with empathy and imagination.

Learning Outcomes:

1. Recognize varying cultural traditions, histories, values, and beliefs.
2. Understand the social and cultural frameworks in which knowledge is produced.
3. Analyze and synthesize information to draw inferences or create new knowledge.
4. Identify one's own cultural assumptions to skillfully negotiate across differences.

D: DATA, INFORMATION & COMPUTATIONAL LITERACY

evaluating and employing varied kinds of evidence, from statistics to stories

To make informed and independent decisions, we must be able to critically evaluate a variety of information sources, interrogate their origins, and analyze their significance. Scientific methods and quantitative reasoning are key to such determinations, especially in data-rich and computer-enabled settings. Whether weighing competing public health narratives, the validity of mathematical models for financial markets, or the implications of disinformation for democratic processes, these courses help students clarify problems for which data are abundant but meaning may be obscure.

Learning Outcomes:

1. Acquire or create data using methods that have a sound scientific basis.
2. Evaluate data for quality and bias in service to a specific goal with sensitivity to context.
3. Use appropriate tools to analyze data to increase information value.
4. Convey empirical results as a persuasive, logical argument.

Back to top

E. ETHICAL & SOCIAL ENGAGEMENT
examining power, justice, and responsibility, in settings ranging from the classroom to the planet

Challenging ethical questions confront us in every domain of life. What moral obligation do we have to ourselves, to each other, to our local, national, and global communities, and to the non-human world? Whether considering collective responsibility for global income disparities, the role of social values in the design of technological systems, or the relationship between historical and contemporary wrongs like sexism and racism, these courses ask students to interrogate their own beliefs and take on the perspectives of diverse others in order to reason carefully about matters of justice, equity, and power.

Learning Outcomes:

1. Identify ethical questions concerning individual and collective responsibility and their implications.
2. Recognize historical realities and contemporary factors that contribute to power dynamics within and between societies.
3. Examine and interpret experiences from multiple perspectives.

Sample Courses by Capacity

During departmental visits in Spring 2023, we asked faculty members to consider how classes that they currently teach might line up with the proposed capacities (see Program and Department Survey). Below is a selection of possibilities suggested by colleagues and our own perusal of current course offerings. Note that classes from all three A&S divisions can be found under each category. Note too, that these courses could be tagged with either one or two capacities, depending on their focus.

Written & Creative Expression

- AADS 1506 - Film Aesthetics & Representation
- CSET 2200 - Science Podcasting
- EES 2110 - Global Climate Change
- ENGL 1290 - Beginning Poetry Workshop
- HIST 1710 - Writing for Social Change
- MHS 2150 - Medical Humanities
- PSCI 2231 - Contemporary Autocracy
- THTR 2311 - Writing for Stage and Screen

Systemic & Structural Thinking

Back to top

- ARTS 1101 - Introduction to Studio Art
- ASTR 1010 - Introduction to Astronomy
- BSCI 1510 - General Biology
- ECON 2180 - Sports Economics
- GSS 1273 - Gender and the City
- HIST 3200 - Poverty, Economy, and Society in Sub-Saharan Africa
- MATH 1200 - Single-Variable Calculus
- SOC 1030 - Environment and Society

Cultural & Interpretive Investigation

- AMER 2500 - American Cultures: Past, Present, Future
- ANTH 2214 - Art and Architecture of the Ancient Americas
- BSCI 1400 - Science Education Pedagogy
- KOR 2201 - Intermediate Korean
- LATS 2201 - Introduction to Latinx Studies
- MHS 1950 - Theories of the Body
- MATH 3000 - History of Math
- RLST 1010 - Encountering Religious Diversity

Data, Information, & Computational Literacy

- CHEM 2222 - Organic Chemistry
- CLAS 3600 - Seminar in Digital Humanities
- CMA 1002 - Moving Images and Analytical Thinking
- CMST 2100 - Argumentation and Debate
- ECON 15000 - Economic Statistics
- PHYS 2255 - Modern Physics
- PSCI 2259 - Campaigns and Elections
- PORT 2205 - Portuguese and Global Health

Ethical & Social Engagement

- BUSA 2160 - Corporate Social Strategy
- HART 2805 - Introduction to Museum Studies
- JWST 2700 - Judaism and Medicine
- MHS 1940 - Racial and Ethnic Health Disparities
- NSC 3250 - Neurological Disease
- PHIL 1005 - Introduction to Ethics
- PPS 2250 - History and Ethics of Public Policy
- PSY 2150 - Principles of Experimental Design

Back to top

Guidelines for Tagging

In contrast to AXLE, and in line with best thinking in general education curriculum design, the committee proposes that only some A&S courses be tagged with Core Capacities. As a general rule, classes tagged (singly or doubly) with the new capacities would be those that:

- are accessible to non-majors;
- contribute primarily to general education; and
- foreground the learning outcomes of the designated capacities.

Departments, rather than individual faculty members, would likely coordinate the initial discussions regarding which courses could be tagged. To begin, we expect roughly 30% of A&S courses to be tagged with capacities. In the first round, departments and programs would aim to propose 3-5 courses that contribute to the capacity requirements in order to create gateways from the Core to the full range of A&S disciplines.

In the event of a positive vote, more detailed guidelines will be available in late summer 2023 to support departments, and will recognize the varying needs of small and large programs, differences between lecture-oriented and seminar-oriented fields, and the array of ways that departments handle course numbering and prerequisites.

Capacities and the Majors and Minors

Our visits to all A&S departments and programs in Spring 2023 yielded a long list of current courses that resonated with the capacities as the committee then imagined them. The names of the capacities have shifted a bit since then in response to colleagues' feedback. But it is worth noting that our faculty submitted hundreds of course titles for each of the Core Capacities, with representation from all three divisions in each. The totals were as follows:

- 280 courses for Written & Creative Expression
- 270 courses for Systemic & Structural Thinking
- 319 courses for Cultural & Interpretive Investigation
- 174 courses for Data, Information & Computational Literacy
- 210 courses for Ethical & Social Engagement

Although it will be entirely up to the faculty in various A&S units, this sort of alignment indicates that departments and programs could—and might want to—build on the Core Capacities in some fashion. Departments could introduce new writing or data literacy requirements into their majors and minors, for example. Or faculty could design advanced, disciplinary-specific courses in systemic thinking or ethical engagement for students interested in achieving a higher level of proficiency in those areas.

Back to top

Tying the Core Capacities to departments' own requirements would encourage students to connect their work in the First-Year and Exploratory Core to specialized study in their chosen fields. Doing so would provide a welcome cohesion to our undergraduate program, enabling students to craft an intelligible whole from the different pieces of their college education.

Examples of Student Schedules

To examine the feasibility of the proposed curriculum requirements for undergraduates, we constructed illustrative pathways for hypothetical students majoring in each division of A&S:

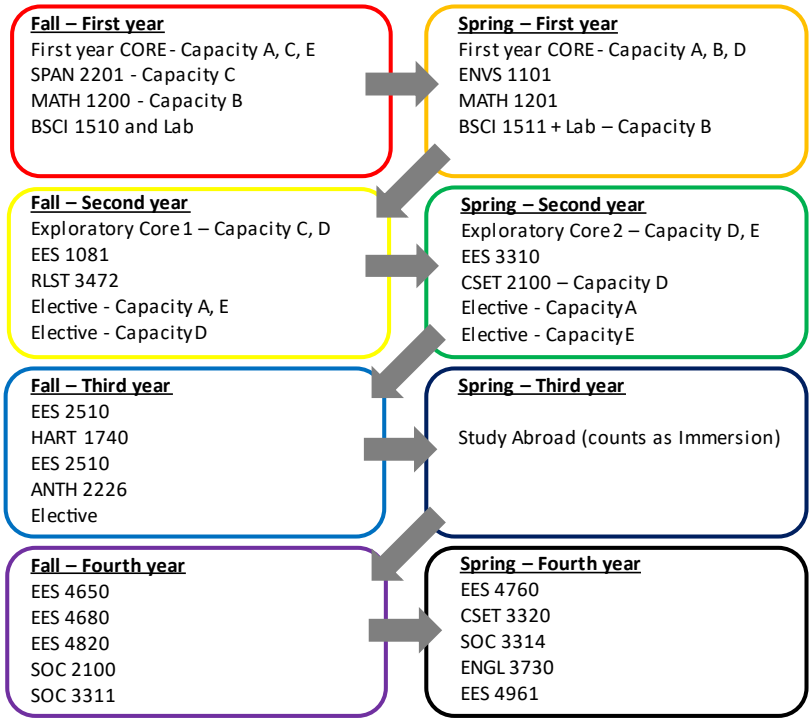
- A student double-majoring in Earth & Environmental Sciences and Climate Studies, who does not decide on a major until their second year, and who takes a semester abroad to pursue an immersion project.
- A student double-majoring in English and Human and Organizational Development (thus crossing college boundaries) and following an honors track in English.
- A student majoring in Economics, minoring in Spanish, taking a semester abroad, and pursuing honors.
- A student double majoring in African American and Diaspora Studies and Political Science, also taking a semester abroad.
- A student majoring in Biological Sciences on a pre-med track with a minor in Spanish.

These pathways are only illustrative, and there may be difficulties we have not seen for other majors, but they demonstrate that the proposed curriculum offers the flexibility to major in any of our three major divisions and to pursue double majors while exploring complementary interests in other disciplines, in addition to offering students a genuine introduction to a liberal arts education. See the diagrams below.

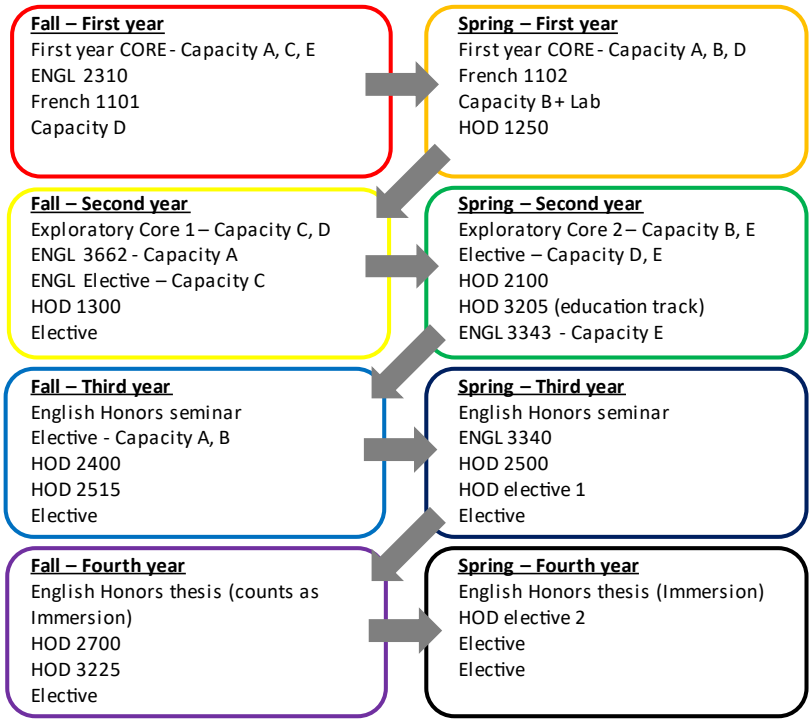
Note: We have considered transfer students' potential pathways through the new curriculum, but will need to study this issue further. Following a positive vote, the Core steering committee will work with the University Registrar's Office and Student Transitions & Community Engagement to set clear guidelines for transfer students in fulfilling Core requirements.

Back to top

Sample Pathway under new CORE: Earth & Environmental Sciences and Climate Studies double-major

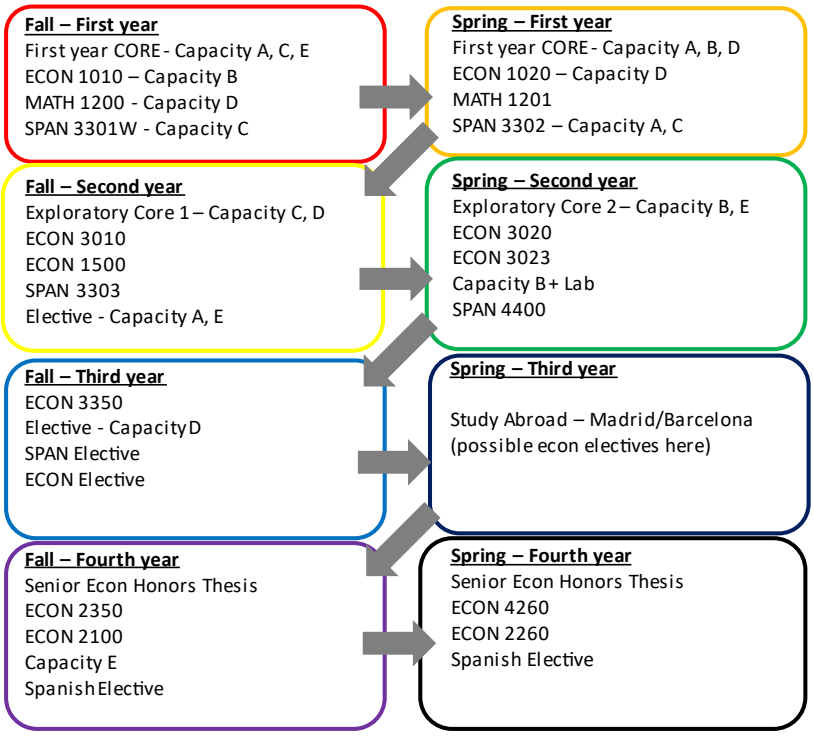


Sample Pathway under new CORE: English and HOD (education track) double major with English Honors

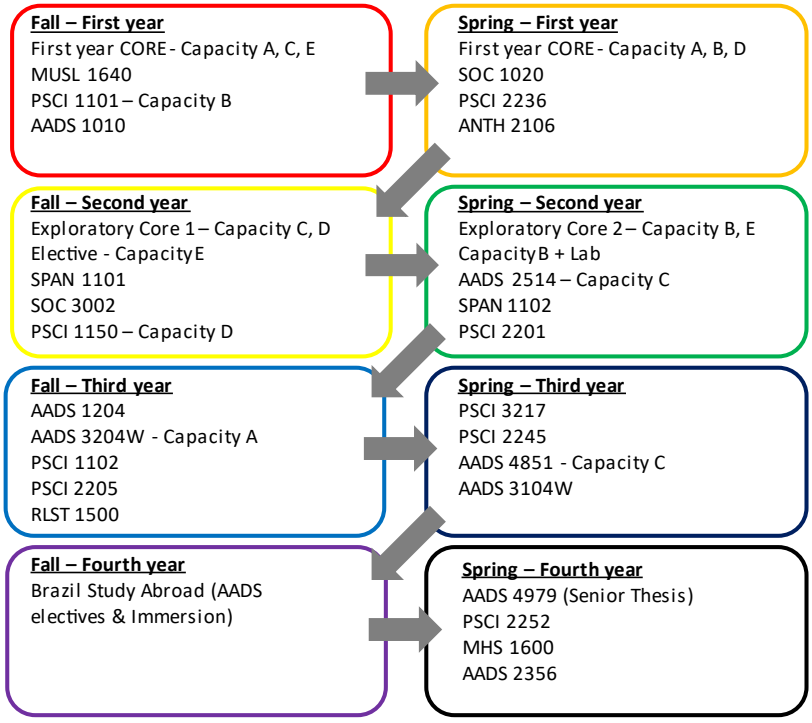


Back to top

Sample Pathway under new CORE: Economics major and Spanish minor

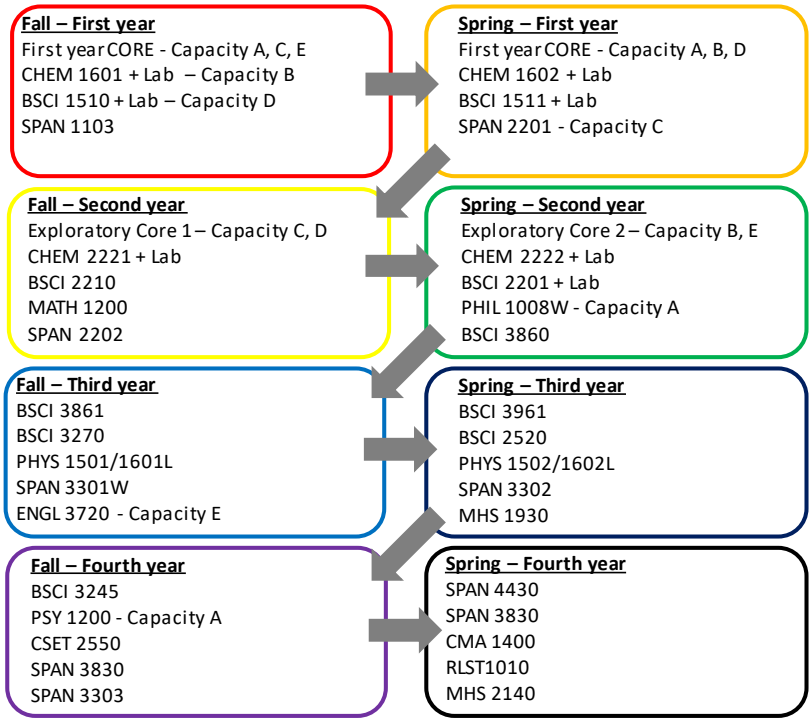


Sample Pathway under new CORE: AADS and Political Science double major and Study Abroad



Back to top

Sample Pathway under new CORE: Pre-Medical with Biological Sciences major, Spanish minor



Back to top

VI. CURRICULAR OVERSIGHT AND SUPPORT

Core Teaching and Learning Community

The First-Year Core will be supported and enriched by what we are calling Core TLC, the Core Teaching and Learning Community, and a set of well-designed resources for instructors, including pedagogical training, assignments and modules developed in conjunction with the Writing Center and Library staff, and common Brightspace pages.

All instructors teaching in the First-Year Core will take part in a May workshop, to be held first in May 2024 (or the spring preceding the curriculum's fall implementation). We expect the workshop to be held over three to four days, with common morning sessions and afternoon breakout sessions of small groups. The Center for Teaching's Online Course Design Institute (OCDI) will serve as a model for this type of training. An abbreviated version of the workshop will be held in May 2023 as part of the pilot program.

Assuming a Fall 2024 rollout, training and conversation among instructors of the May workshop will be needed in advance of that event, which could take place during Spring Break 2024 or in meetings held throughout the spring semester. This workshop will demand significant resources, including personnel, due to the number of instructors in the Core TLC. We expect to partner closely with the CFT in this endeavor and will simply note that in general, a successful Core TLC will require a strong and well-supported CFT. A mentoring program can also help alleviate the staffing burden for the CFT and enhance the workshop. In this model, faculty who have taught in the Core (or the Fall 2023 pilot courses) could help lead the May workshop, facilitating breakout groups of those new to these courses.

In consultation with Joe Bandy, Interim Director of the Center for Teaching, we have sketched the workings of the potential Core TLC:

- Spring semester: Workshop or meetings of faculty and, potentially, CFT staff leading the May workshop. The facilitators will need to have a draft of the common elements of the syllabi for the First-Year Core along with weekly lesson plans. They will also draft a plan for the upcoming Core TLC including the composition of the breakout groups and their faculty facilitator.
- May: Core TLC workshop convenes. This 3-4-day workshop, based on the Online Course Design Institute, will feature morning meetings as a large group and afternoon meetings in smaller pods. It will cover learning objectives, leading discussion groups, and making assignments that scaffold. All faculty teaching in the Core for the first time that following year will be required to participate.
- Summer: Remote discussion groups. These groups will use Brightspace for asynchronous, online discussion of readings, to share ideas, and to prepare for the fall semester.

Back to top

- Fall: Weekly meetings in smaller pods (based on teaching time and/or meeting availability).
- December: End of semester luncheon or dinner; "refresher" session for instructors in the spring semester of the First-Year Core.

Core Office and Governance

To launch and oversee the new College Core, we envision the need for a Core Office that would work under the auspices of, or alongside, the A&S Office of Undergraduate Education. Its organization, members, and their tasks could be as follows:

Core Director:
This faculty member's responsibilities would be to oversee the First-Year and Exploratory Core; establish a process for ongoing, holistic assessment of the new curriculum and recommend changes as needed; conduct annual reviews of the Core; recruit instructors for Core teaching; and liaise with the A&S Office of Undergraduate Education, the Center for Teaching, the Library, and the Immersion Office.

Steering Committee:
This body will be composed of A&S faculty across all three divisions who serve in two-year cycles, with staggered committee membership so that half the group rotates off each year. This group will create guidelines for course design; approve courses for the "Big Question" program; and coordinate with campus partners, including residential colleges, to develop campus-wide activities that complement the Core curriculum.

Course Leaders (2):
These faculty members, who have experience teaching in the Core, will assist with logistics of the first-year sequence, convene meetings of Core instructors, and coordinate the soliciting, vetting, and selecting of texts for the first-year sequence.

Administrative Assistant/Assessment Specialist:
This staff member will conduct assessment of learning objectives and outcomes as well as handle budgeting, logistics, and scheduling for the Core program.

Budgeting

It is the expectation that most of the teaching in the Core will be done by full-time faculty across all ranks, including new hires, and a small set of postdoctoral fellows. While recruitment will emphasize the pleasures of teaching within a cohort, examining big ideas with and mentoring first-year students, and developing new courses, we believe additional compensations are warranted for Core teaching.

Back to top

In recognition of the time and effort it will take to teach a new course and participate in the Core TLC, faculty teaching in the First-Year Core and participating in the spring Core Workshop will receive $5,000, either as a salary supplement or as research funds. This will be the case for at least the first few years of the program as we launch and staff the new curriculum.

Faculty teaching in "Big Question" Core courses would receive a $2,500 development grant for any newly-designed course. Those co-teaching in this program would also each receive full teaching credit for the course.

The Core will thus need to have permanent budget lines for:

- Salary supplements ($5,000) for faculty teaching in the First-Year Core. If there are 140 faculty teaching in the Core in the first year of its implementation, the costs of salary supplements would be $700,000.
- Course development grants ($2,500) for faculty teaching "Big Question" courses.

In addition, funds will be needed to support the new Core office and any co-curricular planning (art shows, theatre productions, visiting speakers) for the First-Year Core.

Timetable for Implementation

If the Core were implemented in AY 2024-25, the timeline would unfold as follows:

<u>First-Year Core Courses (CORE 1000 and CORE 1010)</u>

- These courses would need to be created one time only.
- Courses must be in YES by March 2024 (there is some flexibility since incoming first-year students do not register until June 2024).
- Faculty recruitment and selection must be complete by mid-semester Fall 2023 so that departments can plan their teaching needs for AY 2024-25. Departments that will need replacement resources will have time to make arrangements.
- Steering committee approves courses and their capacity tags by the end of Fall 2023.

If we follow the current course approval process, new course proposals for Fall 2024 must be submitted by January 2024 and new course proposals for Spring 2025 must be submitted by February 2024.

<u>Exploratory Core: "Big Question" Courses (CORE 2000s)</u>

Assuming these courses will first be taught in Fall 2025:

- Courses will need to be in YES by March 2025 so that students can enroll during the registration period.
- Courses will need to be approved at latest by mid-Fall 2024, so that departments can plan their teaching.

Back to top

- However, since these courses will be new courses, if an initial approval happens by Spring 2024, faculty can apply for Course Development Grants and use Summer 2024 to fully develop their courses.

Ongoing Assessment, Review and Revision

The first semester of our committee's work required intensive research and data collection to evaluate AXLE. It was challenging to track down the information we needed, including crucial data that would enable us to know whether our liberal education requirement was meeting its own goals. It became clear that whatever we proposed to take its place would benefit enormously from careful and continuous evaluation.

Building detailed assessment into the new curriculum from the beginning will be essential—indeed, it will be the only way to give our faculty a clear view of how well the new curriculum is working, and where and how it needs to evolve.

On this point, it is worth underscoring that our committee has been intent on creating a curriculum that does not remain static but can (and should!) evolve over time. We envision both the First-Year Core and the Exploratory Core to be a field for productive experimentation (around assignments, modules, grading, team-teaching models, and more). We fully expect that the first-year themes and readings will shift regularly; that new proposals for the "Big Question" Core courses will spark conversations about how to improve all of them; and that the Core Capacities themselves will be refined and altered as disciplines, and what we think students should learn and know, change.

For these reasons, program assessment will be an important responsibility of the new Core Office. We will want to be able to conduct thorough reviews of the First-Year Core, the Exploratory Core, and the Core Capacities—not just as we roll them out but also in the years beyond. A Core Office equipped to conduct fine-grained assessments at the course level will enable us to monitor how well the new courses and capacities are preparing our students (and specific subgroups, such as first-generation, international, and minoritized students) for advanced coursework. Comprehensive program evaluation will help us gauge whether the core program is making meaningful differences in students' sense of belonging and access to faculty mentoring.

For the curriculum to remain dynamic—and also responsive to the needs of faculty and students—we will need thoughtful data collection. We anticipate, at a minimum, conducting surveys, evaluating student artifacts, developing new kinds of course evaluations, holding interviews with participating faculty and students, and reviewing enrollment data on an annual basis.

Leading into the proposed curriculum implementation, the assessment goals will include:

Back to top

- Evaluating the core pilot courses (Fall 2023), including student learning outcomes, faculty preparation, and new forms of course evaluation;
- Identifying longitudinal data from instruments like the First Year Survey, Enrolled Student Survey, Senior Survey, and Quality of Life Survey to use as a baseline for comparing the outcomes for students under the new curriculum to those under AXLE;
- Specifying holistic aspects of the new core curriculum for programmatic review (e.g.. improved connections to faculty, greater sense of belonging, amount of discussion about course materials outside of class); and
- In consultation with the steering committee, establishing a timeline for review of Core courses, capacities, and the new curriculum at set intervals, with regular reports to the A&S faculty.

A thorough evaluation of the first-year pilot courses (and associated teaching workshops and course meetings) in Fall 2023 will enable the steering committee to fully revise those courses before class-wide implementation in Fall 2024 (or 2025).

Phasing in the New Curriculum

If the A&S Core is voted in, this new curriculum will need to work alongside AXLE for three years as current students finish out their AXLE requirements and new students follow Core requirements instead.

An ad hoc implementation committee will address how to manage this transition as smoothly as possible during the summer of 2023, with representation from the Core steering committee as well as the University Registrar's Office, the Office of Undergraduate Education, CASPAR, and the Admissions Office.

Back to top

VII. FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

These questions were compiled from meetings with faculty from all A&S departments and programs in Spring 2023; from the analysis of those discussions by the Departments, Majors and Pathways Subcommittee; and from all-campus Open Houses in Fall 2022 and Spring 2023.

Core Courses

Is the First-Year Core a "Great Books" or Western Civilizations course?

> **No:** Although many wonderful texts of all kinds—manuscripts, artworks, films, and artifacts—will indeed be assigned in the First-Year Core, those texts are intended as pretexts for discussing big and enduring questions from multiple angles, including non-Western traditions. They will also regularly be revised, both in theme and content, based on careful review but also the interests of instructors teaching in the Core. The only fixed selection principles for the assigned readings are: 1) that they provoke meaningful discussions; and 2) that they are diverse in terms of time period, place of origin, and authorship.

Why mandate a common course?

> As noted in Section IV above, the reasons the committee is proposing a common first-year course sequence are pedagogical, intellectual, and social. By building foundational capacities in a consistent way into the first year of study—including reading, writing, and data analysis as well as practice in the rules of academic engagement—we will be equipping our students for the rest of the college career in a much more deliberate and intentional way than we currently do. We will also be able to assess much more carefully how well we are achieving this.
>
> A course that shares questions, readings, and themes across the entire first-year cohort (and thus opens up possibilities for creative co-curricular programming) will, we believe, also have enormous benefits for undergraduate culture: a shared intellectual commons to parallel the residential Commons. This will be true for faculty as well. The intellectual conviviality that comes of teaching in a program like this is one of the most consistent things we have heard from colleagues at other universities with common curricula.
>
> Finally, we take seriously the research indicating that small seminars and close faculty mentorship greatly improve students' sense of belonging in the first year of college. This proposal ensures that all students will have two such experiences as they launch their studies, connecting them to different faculty members and to the entire group of Core faculty through common office hours, co-curricular programs and the like. The common footing that shared materials and skills provide incoming students, particularly first-generation students and those from under-resourced high schools, also motivate our proposal.

Back to top

How will readings be selected?

The 23 faculty in the pilot program for Fall 2023 are currently developing two shared syllabi for this phase of the sequence. Each are proposing reading selections, which will be vetted by the group. As noted above, the principles for inclusion are that the readings: 1) must provoke good discussions; and 2) collectively be diverse in time, place, perspective, and authorship. The pilot courses will be carefully evaluated by the Core Office and revised for Fall 2024—again, based on Core instructor suggestions and feedback, including the suggestions of those new to the course.

Will faculty want to teach from a syllabus that they don't have full control over?

Faculty teaching in the Core will take part in developing and revising the syllabi for these courses but will commit to teaching from a common syllabus (with modules and days that allow for more flexibility). Judging by the enthusiastic response to a call for volunteers for the Fall 2023 pilot and our survey of department and program faculty in the winter and spring of 2023, this model holds a great deal of appeal for faculty across ranks and divisions.

These sound like humanities courses: what role will the social and natural sciences play?

Our goal is to have faculty across all the A&S divisions staffing the First-Year Core as well as the Exploratory Core courses. The new Core Capacities are designed to traverse all the divisions and so it will be especially important to have faculty in the natural and social sciences as well as humanities faculty teaching in the program and helping us develop modules and assignments in every one of the capacities.

Given the different teaching loads (and size of the respective faculties) across the humanities, social sciences, and natural sciences, we are not aiming for an even three-way split but rather a critical mass of faculty teaching in both parts of the Core from each division. Recruiting faculty and maintaining the right balance of fields will be one of the responsibilities of the Core steering committee.

What will happen to the First Year Writing Seminars?

The FYWS designation will no longer exist under this proposal, but many of the seminars offered under that header can continue to be offered, fulfilling the Written & Creative Expression capacity. We also believe that offering a small number of first-year writing seminars can successfully run alongside the Core for instructors who are committed to that format. That said, the committee hopes that many faculty with experience in the FYWS program will consider teaching in the First-Year Core, which we believe will similarly act as a gateway to those instructors' other courses and home departments. We see the First-Year Core as a real investment in the reading and writing skills of our students—even as we recognize the loss that the end of the FYWS program represents for many faculty.

Back to top

Will the First-Year Core replace Vanderbilt Visions?

No: Vanderbilt Visions is a university program across all the undergraduate colleges that orients new students and will continue. The First-Year Core is instead a set of academic courses intentionally designed for A&S students in the first year and is intended to complement but in no way replicate the discussions held in Visions.

Why are the First-Year Core classes listed at 4 credits?

There are two primary reasons that the First-Year Core is proposed as four-hour classes. First, the extra hour encompasses the additional time commitment required for scaffolded writing instruction along with supplemental support for students, including writing workshops, expanded office hours, one-on-one meetings, and modules devoted to introducing the Core Capacities. Students will also be participating in activities and co-curricular programs outside of class keyed to each semester's themes.

Second, the extra hour of credit is intended to make it easier for most students in the first year to enroll in just four courses each semester without falling behind in credit hours. There is overwhelming faculty (including Commons Faculty) and student support for a four-course norm in the first year, when students are making a series of life and developmental transitions, and where we as faculty need to be especially mindful of student stress and anxiety. The fourth hour of the first-year sequence will also make room for assignments and exercises devoted to habits that support academic life. See Section IV for more details.

How will we staff and fund all these new Core classes?

The new courses will be taught by A&S faculty of all ranks and academic divisions and by our cohort of Collaborative Humanities postdoctoral fellows. Additional hiring of continuing-track and tenure-track faculty will also be necessary in order to ensure that all departments can participate in Core teaching, and particularly to help smaller units contribute to the Core. The Dean's Office has already committed to and budgeted new funds for this staffing and has begun securing additional financial support from granting agencies and donors to launch the first phase of the new curriculum. See Section IV for more details.

How can we guarantee that the burden of new courses doesn't fall on continuing-track faculty?

We very much *want* continuing-track faculty to help develop and teach the new courses, but to work well the new Core must be a commitment shared by our entire faculty. Initial interest in the Core (both the First-Year and Exploratory courses) has come from those in all ranks: continuing-track faculty, assistant professors, associate professors, and full professors. (In our pool of 23 pilot participants for Fall 2023, 10 are continuing-track faculty, and 13 are tenured or tenure-track faculty.) Postdoctoral fellows will supply additional teaching strength in both semesters of the First-Year Core. The Core

Back to top

steering committee will be responsible for monitoring the teaching balance in these courses and recruiting new instructors as needed.

What kind of training and support will be available for faculty teaching in the First-Year Core?

First-Year Core instructors will be required to take part in a multi-day May workshop that will include sessions with the Center for Teaching, the Writing Center, and faculty experts in small-seminar instruction, leading interdisciplinary conversations, and tackling difficult topics. Faculty and postdocs teaching in the first-year sequence will also be part of a Core Teaching and Learning Community that will meet weekly during the semester and will include additional pedagogical support. To recognize this work, all First-Year Core instructors participating in the May workshop will receive a $5,000 stipend, to be taken as salary or research funds. See Section IV for more details.

What kinds of courses can be taught in the "Big Question" program?

The "Big Question" courses are meant to foreground Core Capacities, open up big and exciting topics and problems to students, and introduce integrative and interdisciplinary tools for tacking these questions. We envision that a wide array of different models will be proposed by our faculty and that the goals and practices around these courses will evolve. See discussion of the Exploratory Core in Section IV above.

How can I find potential partners for co-teaching a "Big Question" course?

We are exploring platforms and gatherings that will bring faculty together in structured settings to kick-start conversations around common interests and across disciplines. We expect that the common teaching and new modes of faculty collaboration and sociality fostered by the First-Year Core will also help faculty find teaching partners.

Capacities

Will all courses be tagged with capacities?

No: unlike AXLE, only courses that meet the learning goals of specific Core Capacities will be tagged; to begin, we expect that roughly a third of our offerings would suit. This sort of intentional tagging accords with best current thinking in general education curriculum design and prevents curricular "drift" away from the pedagogical intentions built into the new Core. For a more detailed account of how this might work, see "Guidelines for Tagging" above.

Can courses taken in the new A&S Core count for the major?

Yes: all courses except for the four designated Core courses (the first-year sequence and the two "Big Question" courses) may count for major requirements. This allows students to use the Exploratory Core as we intend: to find their way into new questions and areas

Back to top

as they contemplate different majors and minors, Immersion projects, and internships. (Note that departments could count particular "Big Question" courses taught or co-taught by their faculty as part of their major or minor requirements if they so choose.)

Other

What is the place of Immersion in the new curriculum?

The First-Year Core will introduce students to Immersion requirements, incorporate elements of experiential learning, and build in a spring assignment that asks students to begin thinking about possible Immersion projects. The Exploratory Core and additional classes in the Core Capacities will provide students with potential directions for these projects and facilitate their development as they move into their majors. Additionally, if a one-credit Core Capstone (see Section IX) is adopted—potentially in the form of a course, a peer advisory role in the First-Year Core, or a departmental presentation—this will allow students to complete their Immersion projects and satisfy the reflection requirement.

Is the effort required for this new curriculum in tension with the university's emphasis on faculty research?

Vanderbilt's commitment to undergraduate education is a vital part of its mission and co-equal to the university's research ambitions. The considerable intellectual, teaching, and financial investments in the new curriculum signify our responsibility for undergraduate education; they are not optional. Moreover, as several of our committee members know from personal experience, classroom teaching, and especially interdisciplinary team teaching, can generate new faculty research projects. We expect the "Big Question" courses in particular to inspire and support faculty research efforts.

How will we know that these reforms work?

The committee has devoted considerable time to the study of curricular models and design principles. But we know that curricular reform is always an experiment, that student behavior cannot easily be forecasted, and that we will need to evaluate each piece of the new curriculum with multiple measures (see Section VI, Ongoing Assessment, Review, and Revision). These will include fine-grained course evaluations from both students and faculty (more detailed and more closely keyed to learning goals than in our current evaluation system), assessment of learning outcomes measured against AXLE benchmarks, and exit interviews with cohorts of students. Continuous assessment of how well the new Core is working, including brief weekly reading evaluations in the first-year sequence, is part of the rationale for the new Core Office and will enable the Core to remain dynamic and open to change and course-correction.

Back to top

VIII. PROPOSED A&S COLLEGE CORE

We propose a new A&S College Core:
A general education curriculum that is *inviting*, *inspiring*, and *integrated*

Core courses introduce all students to the richness and power of an arts & science education.
Core capacities develop key competencies across every academic division of the college.

Fulfilled in a minimum of 10 courses, the new A&S Core is less cumbersome but more intentional, flexible, and intuitive than AXLE—offering our students common intellectual experiences, meaningful pathways through their education, and a compelling rationale for liberal arts study.

Students can complete the College Core by fulfilling 16 Core Capacities:

(A) Written & Creative Expression: 4
(B) Systemic & Structural Thinking: 3
(C) Cultural & Interpretive Investigation: 3
(D) Data, Information & Computational Literacy: 3
(E) Ethical & Social Engagement: 3

First-Year Core: 2 common writing seminars (class size: 15) fulfilling 6 Core Capacities[11]

- Fall: CORE 1000 – A, C, E (4 hours)
- Spring: CORE 1001 – A, B, D (4 hours)

Exploratory Core: 8 courses fulfilling the remaining 10 Core Capacities (2 each of A, B, C, D, E)

- 2 "Big Question" courses (CORE 2000s) after the first year – double-tagged
- 6 courses tagged with Core Capacities, including at least:
  - -1 world language course at second-semester proficiency or above
  - -1 Humanities, 1 Social Science, and 1 Natural Science lecture course + lab*

* *the lab requirement is a placeholder for a redesigned requirement to be in place by Fall 2025*

Note: Students can fulfill the general education requirement with a minimum of 33 credit hours, which includes the First-Year Core: (2) 4-hour courses; and the Exploratory Core: (8) 3-hour courses + (1) 1-hour lab.

Students who need to take English Composition (ENG 1100) and/or a first-semester world language (1101-level) course would have a minimum requirement of 36-39 hours.

[11] For the Fall 2023 pilot, these courses are "Being Human, Encountering Others" and "Science, Technology, Values."

Back to top

Language, Laboratory, and Divisional Requirements

This proposal includes, within the new Core curriculum, a revised world language requirement, a 1-hour laboratory requirement, and a divisional requirement.

World Language Requirement: For proposed changes to the world language requirement, endorsed by the full committee, see Section XI, Report of the World Languages Subcommittee.

Laboratory Requirement: The committee recommends retaining the current lecture/lab requirement as a placeholder for a redesigned requirement. We call for the formation of a study group on the lab requirement in Fall 2023 to examine questions regarding learning outcomes, appropriate credit hours, and possible expansion to additional departments with the goal of a Fall 2025 implementation of the new requirement. See Section IX, Study Group on the Lab Requirement.

Divisional Requirement: The First-Year Core, Exploratory Core, and Core Capacities are designed to expose students to many different disciplinary approaches and modes of inquiry. To make absolutely certain, however, that students find their way to each of the university's three grand divisions, we have built in a divisional requirement: at least one of their Exploratory Core classes must be housed in the natural sciences, one in the social sciences, and one in the humanities.

Key Differences Between Proposed Curriculum and AXLE

Proposed Curriculum	AXLE
Minimum credit hours: 33	Minimum credit hours: 42
Competency-based requirements	Divisional/disciplinary requirements
Core-based	Distribution system
Common intellectual experience	No common elements
Deliberate introduction to A&S	Uneven/inconsistent introduction to A&S
Scaffolded and sequenced pedagogy	Little scaffolding and sequencing
General education courses specially tagged	All courses tagged
Courses may count for more than one capacity	Courses may count for only one requirement
First-Year Core	First-Year Writing Program
Integrative approach to coursework	Discrete courses and requirements
Two semesters of first-year writing instruction	One semester of first-year writing instruction
Language study at VU for all students	Language study at VU for most students

Back to top

IX. ADDITIONAL COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS

Bachelor of Science Degree

The committee strongly endorses restoring the Bachelor of Science degree in the College of Arts & Science and immediately planning for this change in the relevant natural science departments.

The B.S. degree, once offered in A&S, was retired in 2004-2005 as a consequence of the AXLE reform. The smaller number of hours required in the new Core as compared to AXLE makes it possible for natural sciences majors who so choose to pursue the necessary additional coursework for the B.S. We have heard near unanimous support among natural sciences faculty and students, the Admissions Office, and our committee to restore the degree so as to afford the widest range of graduate-level study options for our undergraduates.[12] Reviving the B.S. degree will encourage talented undergraduate scientists in all fields to apply for admission to the College of Arts & Science. Once they are here, the B.S. option will strengthen students' preparation and credentials for a variety of graduate programs and career fields.

Further incentives for this change are rooted in federal policies, since international students with STEM degrees are now allowed to remain in the United States for three years post-degree through the Optional Practical Training (OPT) provision. Prior to this, the cap had been 18 months of work allowance for J-1 students.

We recommend constituting Bachelor of Science committees in each of the relevant departments as soon as possible so that their faculties can begin drafting changes to majors and develop or revise courses necessary to re-start the B.S. track (generally, 2-4 courses or labs in addition to what the BA requires). Ideally, the B.S. degree would be in place for students entering in Fall 2024 or Fall 2025, coincident with implementation of the new curriculum.

Proposed timeline:

May 2023

- Meet with Natural Sciences (and interested Social Sciences) departments to discuss prospective timeline for BS.
- Connect department leadership (Chairs and Directors, Directors of Undergraduate Studies) with OAPRAA Director, Eric Cummings, for resources and support.

Fall 2023

- Departments complete self-study and review of needed courses and program changes needed to meet BS standard by November 2023.

[12] In the AXLE Survey conducted by our committee in November 2022, 15% of the student respondents cited the fact that A&S only confers a Bachelor of Arts and not a Bachelor of Science degree as a reason they or their peers left the college.

Back to top

- Convene departmental leadership for material review with OAPRAA in December 2023.

Spring 2024

- Departments submit materials to A&S Curriculum Committee for January review (special committee meeting called if needed) and complete faculty governance process (Faculty Council, A&S Faculty Meeting).
- A&S Communications team partners with departments to create materials and broadcast messaging when approved.
- A&S Leadership communicates changes to Undergraduate Admissions.

Fall 2024

- Department identifies and develops courses for remaining BS courses; submit to A&S Curriculum Committee for expedited review.
    - These courses will likely be upper-level and not needed for students to be on track for starting the BS degree in Fall 2024.

Core Capstone

The committee recommends piloting an optional 1-credit requirement that would bookend the Core and encourage graduating seniors' cumulative reflection on their A&S education. Given the fact that it would be a good number of years before we have seniors who will be part of the new Core, there is time to develop this proposal. But we imagine that there could be an array of options for satisfying the requirement, including a 1-credit Core Capstone course, a public departmental presentation, or a peer advising role in the First-Year Core. A 1-credit Core Capstone could also serve as the Immersion reflection requirement for A&S.

Revised Pass/Fail Policy

Our subcommittees on Pedagogy and on Academic Policies have devoted considerable attention to research on, and higher education trends related to, pass/fail policies. Our general recommendation is that pass/fail (renamed credit/no credit) be more widely available to our students in order to encourage wider course exploration.

Although not part of the present faculty vote on the curriculum, the committee would like to place a revised policy on the table for faculty consideration at the earliest opportunity.

We recommend several significant changes to the college's existing Pass/Fail policy, including:

- Changing the name to Credit/No Credit (CR/NC).
- Raising the grade threshold for credit from D- to C.
- Allowing the CR/NC option in the first year, up to one course per semester.
- Permitting students to take major/minor-eligible courses on a CR/NC basis once they have completed their major/minor requirements through other courses.

Back to top

A full explanation and rationale for these recommendations can be found in Section XI, Report of the Academic Policy Subcommittee.

Other Academic Policies

The Academic Policy subcommittee developed three additional recommendations to put before the faculty for discussion and consideration next year.

- *Transfer credit for Study Abroad Equivalent Courses*: Accept all. As we encourage more students to take advantage of Study Abroad options, we should permit courses already determined to be 'course equivalents' to existing Vanderbilt courses to count toward our Capacities requirements.

- *Minimum hours in A&S*: Shift to 75. Reducing the minimum hours in A&S from 102 (or 90 if one's second major is in another college) to 75 will permit students more flexibility in their programs of study. For those with majors in other colleges, it will make it easier for them to keep their home college as A&S, should they wish. (Note that during the comment period, the question was raised as to whether A&S should abandon a minimum-hours policy altogether: this will be added to the docket of potential academic policy changes.)

- *Advanced Placement/International Baccalaureate*: Maintain for now. With the exception of AP language testing, we recommend that A&S keep the current Advanced Placement and International Baccalaureate policy for now (but see next recommendation below), enabling students to credit 18 hours toward their progress to degree.

Proposed timeline:

Summer 2023
- Meet with A&S Office of Undergraduate Education to plan legislation and committee process for presenting academic policy changes to full faculty.

Fall 2023
- Submit materials to A&S Curriculum Committee for October review (special committee meeting called if needed) and complete faculty governance process (Faculty Council, A&S Faculty Meeting). Ideally voted in and goes into effect Fall 2024

Academic Policies Across the Four Colleges

We recommend that a four-college committee be formed to consider a uniform university-wide policy regarding AP/IB. This recommendation rests on recent research (and political controversy)

Back to top

around the AP program[13]; the recognition that AP courses are not equivalent to most Vanderbilt courses; and concerns regarding equity, since not all incoming students have access to AP/IP courses. In addition, uneven policies across the undergraduate colleges pertaining to allowable AP/IB credit and transfer credit have had unfortunate results, leading to confusion about Vanderbilt policies and prompting students to shift home colleges based simply on ease of fulfilling requirements.

Study Group on the Lab Requirement

Science labs at Vanderbilt are often either integrated as components of larger lecture courses (lab sections) or comprise the entirety of smaller stand-alone lab courses. Students often gain critical skills from lab and experiential courses, ranging from practice with physical procedures and skills, to data collection and analysis, to complex reasoning and reflection bridging theory and practice.

Currently, one laboratory class is required for all A&S students. The Natural Sciences Subcommittee, with the support of the full committee, recommends maintaining the 1-lab course requirement in the first iteration of the new curriculum, with the caveat that a study group be formed in Fall 2023 to assess the effectiveness of the requirement in meeting learning goals, including consideration of the pedagogical benefits to STEM and non-STEM majors. The study group would be charged with developing an improved lab requirement for rollout no later than Fall 2025. These recommendations would be based on the study of various models and best practices for lab instruction.

Several additional topics regarding the requirement surfaced in the course of our committee work. One is the disparity in the number of students taking labs in different natural science departments, which has downstream consequences for departmental resources available to majors. Another is the question of how broadly we ought to define a “lab” and whether to consider increasing the lab opportunities and offerings in other departments (e.g., Psychology, Anthropology, and Mathematics but perhaps further still).

We also recommend discussion of practices that would create more consistency among lab requirements, including a policy that no more than 4 hours of work (inside or outside of the course) be required for 1 unit of credit. Research for credit opportunities should also be made consistent, so that a student enrolling in 3 research credits is contributing consistent effort, regardless of department.

The Lab Study Group will be constituted during Summer 2023 with the goal of producing a draft report for review by the November 2023 faculty meeting. Following a comment period, the Lab Study Group would then submit a final report to the faculty in December 2023.

[13] See for example Annie Abrams, *Shortchanged: How Advanced Placement Cheats Students* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2023).

Back to top

Proposed Timeline:

Summer 2023

- Identify representative group of faculty for the Lab Study Group, including continuing-track and tenure-stream faculty in the natural sciences, lab instructors, and non-STEM faculty.

Fall 2023

- Lab Study Group meets to consider alternative models, especially inquiry-based labs, and provide a report at the November faculty meeting. Initial recommendation sent to A&S Curriculum Steering Committee by December 2023.
- Host feedback sessions from faculty and students in the natural sciences, social sciences, and humanities. Administrative support provided by the A&S Dean's Office.
- Host sessions with faculty in social sciences and humanities about potential expansion of labs under new guidelines. Administrative support provided by the A&S Dean's Office.

Development of Transdisciplinary Language Electives

See the Report of the World Languages Committee.

Back to top

X. AREAS IN NEED OF FURTHER STUDY AND DEVELOPMENT

As the committee considered all facets of the undergraduate program, we came up against a number of issues that we were unable to resolve, often because their solution required partnerships or coordination beyond A&S. Given the importance of each, we want to put these concerns squarely in front of our faculty as priorities for the next phase of curricular reform.

Computational Thinking

- Recommend creating A&S or cross-school committee on computational thinking—including but not limited to faculty in Computer Science in the School of Engineering and those affiliated with the Data Science Institute—with the goal of making such a requirement feasible for all A&S students in the near future.
- Recommend investing in faculty hiring and creative course development across the A&S divisions to ensure that we can field enough offerings in this increasingly important area.

Service Learning

- Recommend an initiative to engage faculty in service-learning principles, including operational support, research funding support, and guidance for partnering with community stakeholders.
- Encourage commitment on the part of the university to support faculty development of new courses with a service-learning component by offering incentives such as:
    - workshops and other resources to train faculty, staff, and students how to forge and maintain thoughtful and ethical partnerships;
    - course releases for faculty who dedicate a significant portion of their time to developing community partnerships and/or new service-learning courses.

Advising, Course Catalog, and Navigation Platform

- Use the Provost's advising committee report (due Spring 2023) as a guide for strengthening and coordinating pre- and post-major advising across the college.
- Review registration timelines and windows to ease pressure on academic advisors.
- Consider changes to course enrollment for first-year students, and moving the bulk of the registration process from early summer to the first week of arrival, when in-person advising can take place.
- Recommend study and possible replacement of YES, the current course navigation platform, for one that is more intuitive for students and that facilitates rather than frustrates exploration.

Course Load and Calendar

- Recommend a full study of alternatives to the 5-course norm and potential benefits to reducing the standard course load, with input from representatives of all four undergraduate colleges.

Back to top

- Consider alternatives to our current instructional blocks, including M/TH and T/F classes with Wednesdays reserved for research, field trips, Immersion projects, and the like.

Badging in the Capacities

- Consider a system of "badging" or micro-credentialing in the Core Capacities to encourage higher levels of competency in the capacities as well as interdisciplinary learning.
- Recommend continuing conversation between those involved in the Core curriculum and the Career Center regarding new badging platforms in development there.

Back to top

XI. SUBCOMMITTEE REPORTS

Back to top

REPORT OF THE LEARNING OUTCOMES SUBCOMMITTEE

(Cynthia Brame, Celina Callahan-Kapoor, Elizabeth Moodey, Adriane Seiffert, Michelle Young)

Learning Outcomes and Rubrics

Learning Outcomes

The Committee recommends the following Learning Outcomes as a goal of General Education in the College. The method used to create these is described in the next section.

1. Contextual awareness: Understanding the social, historical, and cultural frameworks in which knowledge is produced, including relevant power structures. Understanding the diversity of values and impact that culture has on knowledge. Acknowledgement that many issues bridge across the traditional categories of science and humanities, or departments in the College.

2. Investigation: Using diverse approaches and multidisciplinary perspectives to address problems using critical thinking and reasoning. Hypothesis or thesis formation that identifies a research problem or question. Ability to understand and design research.

3. Interpretation: Evaluation, analysis, and synthesis of information to draw inferences or create new knowledge using disciplinary perspectives and procedures. Identify, construct, and/or critically engage with the process of forming logical conclusions.

4. Communication: Clear, organized, and effective use of language to express ideas in written and oral forms.

5. Creative Expression: Use of imagination, exploration, innovation, and problem solving to provide revelation in a unique work.

6. Ethical Engagement: Responsible undertaking of issues of justice and equality, and/or professional conduct.

Method used to create the Learning Outcomes

The Learning Outcomes committee decided, early on, to form Learning Outcomes using information from every department in the College of Arts & Science. The goal of this bottom-up approach was to capture learning outcomes that exist in the College but might not be represented in the initial list of Capacities developed by the full committee, and to isolate the language used by the faculty to define these outcomes to ensure consistency between current learning outcomes and those being developed and to determine if there are current important learning outcomes that are not in the Capacities.

Back to top

First, the data were obtained for the textual, grounded analysis. We obtained the Mission Statements and Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs) defined by each department from Dr. Eric Cummings, Director of OAPRAA: Office of Academic Program Review, Assessment, and Accreditation. These were part of the 2021-2022 annual report for Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC) accreditation. This was a direct data dump, conducted by Matthew Sinclair, Program Manager at OAPRAA. It does not include supplemental files that were in the original report and has some redundant and out-of-date information.

Second, the list of current learning outcomes was created. Three members of the Learning Outcomes committee split up the file from Dr. Eric Cummings such that two members were assigned to each third of the alphabetical list of departments and one member was assigned to the entire list. We read through the Mission Statements and SLOs from our assigned departments with the goal of creating items that isolated language describing a learning outcome, while also removing department-specific or content-specific terms. For example, a phrase such as "interpreting and applying feminist and/or queer theories of gender, race, class, sexuality, ethnicity and ability in a transnational context" was recorded as "interpreting and applying … theories… in a transnational context". The goal was to be comprehensive and direct, so we used all the available text and quoted directly with no interpretation. Doing this allowed to see what generalized learning outcomes-- I.e., "interpreting" -- appeared across the college's learning outcomes. The full list of these items is available upon request.

Third, the items were organized around emerging themes and categories. Every item was printed out on separate slips of paper. At the meeting on February 13, 2023, three members of the committee, with the help of Cynthia Brame, built categories to contain these items in a meaningful way. We placed each slip of paper into a category and created additional categories as needed to capture new concepts. Photos were taken of these slips of papers in the categories.

Fourth, one member of the Learning Outcomes committee read the information from the photos to create a file with the full list of categories with all the items. One category, entitled "Research", was judged to have too many items that contained multiple concepts. It was split into two categories, after which 15 categories remained.

Fifth, representative language was isolated. Committee members highlighted text in the full list that was common and/or useful for relaying the central ideas of that category. Text was highlighted in green if it seemed to fit better in a different category. After this stage, one category with only three items, called "Power and Hierarchies," was judged to be overlapping with other categories, so was assimilated into other categories.

Finally, the language isolated in the previous step was used to construct the 14 Learning Outcomes presented in the February 27 Progress Report. Further revision of the Learning Outcomes has occurred to reduce the number and isolate the important concepts.

Back to top

Capacity Rubrics

The Committee recommends the following rubrics as a goal of general education in the college. These were created from consideration of the Value Rubrics published by the AACU: American Association of Colleges and Universities. The committee did not find any of the 16 rubrics from the AACU to be directly applicable. These are structured in a similar way to the AACU rubrics and were created using the Capacity Committee reports from the Fall 2022 term.

A: Written & Creative Expression

cultivating writing that informs and inspires, whether on the page, stage, screen, or canvas

Learning goals	***Benchmark***	***Milestones***		***Capstone***
	(1)	***(2)***	***(3)***	***(4)***
Oral communication	Produces a persuasive or creative oral presentation	Uses appropriate content to develop and explore ideas, citing relevant sources.	Consistently uses conventions appropriate to the discipline and the task; uses credible, compelling content to explore ideas.	Major persuasive or creative oral presentation that demonstrates clarity, organization, style, and appropriate use of evidence
Written communication	Begins to develop and express simple ideas, with minimal attention to context, audience, and purpose.	Uses appropriate content to develop and explore ideas, citing relevant sources.	Consistently uses conventions appropriate to the discipline and the task; uses credible, compelling content to explore ideas.	Major persuasive or creative written presentation that demonstrates clarity, organization, style, and appropriate use of evidence
Visual communication	Begins to develop and express simple ideas, with minimal attention to context, audience, and purpose.	Uses appropriate content to develop and explore ideas, citing relevant sources.	Consistently uses conventions appropriate to the discipline and the task; uses credible, compelling content to explore ideas.	Major persuasive or creative visual presentation that demonstrates clarity, organization, style, and appropriate use of evidence
Independence & Initiative	Can carry out tasks when scaffolded, outlined, and prompted by the instructor.	Can self-motivate to organize a large assignment into smaller pieces.	Demonstrates independence and initiative beyond class requirements.	Demonstrates independence and initiative throughout every part of an assignment – from conception to organization and planning to execution

Back to top

B: Systemic & Structural Thinking

analyzing complex systems, whether molecules, formal theories, or societies

Learning goals	*Benchmark*	*Milestone*		*Capstone*
	(1)	*(2)*	*(3)*	*(4)*
Curiosity & dedication to life-long learning	Explores a topic at a surface level, providing the basic facts indicating a low-level of interest in the subject. Is willing to fully participate in classroom activities and assignments.	Explores a topic with some evidence of depth, providing occasional insight and/or information indicating mild interest in the subject. Is willing to partake in educational experiences outside of the classroom.	Explores a topic in depth, yielding insight and/or information indicating interest in the subject. Identifies additional opportunities to expand knowledge, skills, and abilities.	Explores a topic in depth, yielding a rich awareness and/or little-known information indicating intense interest in the subject. Pursues opportunities to expand knowledge, skills, and abilities through independent educational experiences outside of the classroom.
Creativity & innovative thinking	Can reformulate a collection of available ideas.	Experiments with creating a novel or unique idea, question, format, or product.	Creates a novel or unique idea, question, format, or product.	Extends a novel or unique idea, question, format, or product to create new knowledge or knowledge that crosses boundaries.
Analysis	Uses evidence but may be in an unsystematic way. Uses relevant sources. Develops an interpretation based on findings.	Organizes evidence, but the organization is not effective in revealing important patterns, differences, or similarities.	Presents information from relevant, reliable sources representing multiple points of view and organizes evidence effectively to reveal important patterns, differences, or similarities.	Synthesizes in-depth information from relevant, reliable sources representing various points of view and synthesizes evidence effectively to reveal important patterns, differences, or similarities. Develops an interpretation that is a logical extrapolation from the evidence. Insightful discussion of limitations and implications.
Problem solving	Acknowledges alternate, divergent, or contradictory perspectives or ideas but only considers a single approach that used to solve the problem.	Considers alternate, divergent, or contradictory perspectives or ideas. Rejects less acceptable approaches to solving problem.	Having selected from among alternatives, develops a logical, consistent plan to solve the problem. Capable of incorporating alternate, divergent, or contradictory perspectives or ideas in an exploratory way.	Not only develops a logical, consistent plan to solve problem, but recognizes consequences of solution and can articulate reason for choosing solution. Fully integrates alternate, divergent, or contradictory perspectives into solution.
Connecting, Synthesizing, Transforming	Recognizes existing connections among ideas or solutions.	Connects ideas or solutions in novel ways.	Synthesizes ideas or solutions into a coherent whole.	Transforms ideas or solutions into entirely new forms.
Independence & initiative	Can carry out tasks when scaffolded, outlined, and prompted by the instructor.	Takes initiative to organize one's time in order to complete scaffolded tasks as part of the assignment.	Independently organizes a large assignment into smaller pieces and is self-motivated to work toward final product.	Demonstrates independence and initiative throughout every part of an assignment – from conceptualization to organization and planning, to execution and presentation.

Back to top

C: Cultural & Interpretive Investigation

deepening our understanding of cultures familiar and unfamiliar, past and present

Learning goals	***Benchmark***	***Milestones***		***Capstone***
	(1)	***(2)***	***(3)***	***(4)***
Global Self-Awareness	Aware of their positionality within their community, nation, or the world.	Capable of self-reflection of their own situatedness either in their community, their nation, or the world	Thoughtful self-reflection of their own situatedness on multiple levels: within their community, nation, and world.	Articulates insights into their own cultural norms and biases, aware of how their identity and experiences shape their understandings of these norms, and able to recognize and respond to the impacts of their own biases. Demonstrates an understanding of the historical realities and contemporary factors that contribute to modern power dynamics within and between societies.
Intercultural competence	Superficial familiarity with other cultures, both domestic and abroad	Awareness of other cultural traditions, either nationally or internationally. Can communicate with people from other cultural traditions.	Asks complex questions about the world and recognizes one's own limits to understand fully the perspective of others.	Conversant with a variety of other cultural traditions, both nationally and internationally, and demonstrates ability to communicate respectfully with people from other groups. Demonstrates sophisticated understanding of the multiple and intersecting frameworks that shape individuals and groups, in particular relation to history, values, politics, communication styles, economy, beliefs, and cultural practices and can skillfully negotiate across differences.
Perspective beyond Anglo-American tradition	Expresses attitudes and beliefs from at least one view.	Familiarity with perspectives that originate from traditions to which they do not belong.	Student thoughtfully integrates non-western perspectives into their own frameworks for understanding the world.	Students develop skepticism towards before-unquestioned frameworks and recognize not only individual biases, but broader epistemological assumptions that have previously functioned invisibly.
Curiosity & Appreciation of Cultural Diversity	Recognition that one's cultural background is not the unique arbiter of morality and truth.	Demonstrates a curiosity to understand and a disposition to valorize other cultural traditions.	Demonstrates a desire to learn not only *about* other cultures but *from* other cultures.	Demonstrates evidence of adjustment in own attitudes and beliefs because of working within and learning from diversity of communities and cultures. Promotes others' engagement with diversity.
Intellectual humility	Has a sense that they are at the beginning, rather than the end, of their learning journey.	Recognizes that cognitive abilities may have limits; capable of reconsidering own position when presented with new evidence.	Recognizes the limits of their own cognitive abilities; can be persuaded to change their mind	Questions their own opinions, positions, and viewpoints. Recognizes the value of opinions that differ from their own.

Back to top

D: Data, Information & Computational Literacy

evaluating and employing varied kinds of evidence, from statistics to stories

Learning goals	*Benchmark*	*Milestones*		*Capstone*
	(1)	*(2)*	*(3)*	*(4)*
Acquisition	Data or information can be found through appropriate sources	Data can be found and defined as variables for analysis	Data can be found or created from observation or other data, with processes such as textual analysis, coding, or instrument construction	Data that is found or created has a sound basis in theory, such as measurement theory or relevant analysis theory
Evaluation	Data can be judged in terms of validity and reliability	Data can be appraised for validity and reliability at a variety of quality levels	Data can be appraised at quality levels and assessed for other characteristics (e.g. bias, resolution)	Data can be appraised at quality levels, assessed for other characteristics, and be determined for value in service to a specific goal or in context
Manipulation	Data can be processed from a raw form to a potentially useable form	Data can be processed with appropriate tools relevant to the analysis goal	Data can be processed with appropriate tools and transformed to increase information value	Data can be processed with appropriate tools, transformed to increase value in a way that is sensitive to context (e.g. statistical control or modeling)
Investigation	Data can be used to test a specific hypothesis	Data can be used to test a hypothesis that informs theory or make inferences beyond the hypothesis	Data can be used to test hypothesis, make inferences, and resolve ambiguities, contradictions, or inconsistencies	Data can be used to test hypotheses, make inferences, resolve ambiguities, and makes a structured argument in service to a specific goal or in context
Communication	Results of analysis can be presented through appropriate media	Results can be presented with useful tools, such as data visualization	Results can be presented with useful tools creating an informative story that avoids bias.	Results can be presented with useful tools to create an informative story that is persuasive to the audience and sensitive to context of the investigation

Back to top

E: Ethical & Social Engagement

probing power, justice, and responsibility, in settings ranging from the classroom to the planet

Learning goals	*Benchmark*	*Milestones*		*Capstone*
	(1)	*(2)*	*(3)*	*(4)*
Ethical reasoning	Student can recognize basic and obvious ethical issues and challenges facing society. Identifies basic ethical reasoning. May not engage with complexity or interrelationships.	Student can identify multiple ethical positions and can state the objections to, assumptions within, and implications of different ethical perspectives and concepts	Student can independently apply ethical perspectives and concepts to an ethical question and is able to consider the full implications of the application.	Can apply ethical reasoning to understand and think critically about important challenges facing society. Student expresses moral commitment to their local and global communities.
Civic engagement	Has experimented with some civic activities, but may not have internalized understanding of their aims or effects. Has limited commitment to future action.	Demonstrates a growing awareness of the importance of participation in civic life. Has participated in politics or other civically-focused actions and can begin to describe how these actions may benefit individual(s) or communities.	Demonstrates independent experience of civic action, with reflective insights or analysis about the aims and accomplishments of one's actions.	Acquires combination of knowledge, skills, values, and motivation to make a difference in the civic life of our communities. Demonstrates ability and commitment to collaboratively work across and within community contexts to achieve a civic aim. Actively promotes the quality of life in a community, through both political and non-political processes.
Openness & accountability	Assumes correctness of the values and practices of their own cultural background.	Willing to engage with people from different backgrounds and accountable for one's own personal actions to others. Can admit when harm has been done.	Open to engage with people from different backgrounds. Aware of how one's personal actions and the contemporary and historical actions of groups to which one belongs may have created and perpetuate negative consequences for other groups. Takes responsibility for past mistakes and wrongs.	Eager to engage with others. Actively takes responsibility for historical and contemporary wrongs and aims to make amends. Can ask for forgiveness for past mistakes and is committed to changing behavior to avoid harming others.
Empathy	Interest in the lives and wellbeing of others.	Care for not only others within their family or community but also for people who belong to other cultural, religious, linguistic, political, social, and economic groups.	Sense of responsibility for the wellbeing of others.	Interprets experiences from multiple perspectives and demonstrates support for the feelings, experiences, and knowledge of individuals from different social groups

Back to top

REPORT OF THE ACADEMIC POLICY SUBCOMMITTEE

(Alex Jacobs, Amy Johnson, Shaul Kelner, Stacy Simplican, Sharece Thrower)

Recommendation for Revised Pass/Fail Policy

Pass/Fail courses currently play a relatively small role in the Vanderbilt experience. The Academic Policy subcommittee recommends that opportunities for Pass/Fail should be expanded and modified to encourage academic risk-taking and intellectual exploration.

Adjusting the Pass/Fail designation will make two significant improvements in our ability to serve students. First, reworking the Pass/Fail system will enable us to better manage the first-year experience and the challenges of adjusting to life at university. Second, adjusting the Pass/Fail system will help us combat risk-aversion among high performing students. Students are increasingly unwilling to take courses that might compromise their GPA, even if those courses would benefit them intellectually or professionally. Some structural change to the incentive structure is therefore appropriate.

The principal challenge in making substantive changes to the Pass/Fail regime is how to incentivize academic risk-taking while maintaining high expectations for student achievement. Pass/Fail designation should increase flexibility for students, but not create so much flexibility that it leads to student disengagement.

Proposed Changes and Their Justification

First, we propose changing the designation of Pass/Fail itself to Credit/No Credit (CR/NC). This new designation is similar to those used at Brown, Cornell, Case Western, Emory, Duke and Wellesley.

Second, standards for what constitutes a pass should be raised. Rather than a D-, students will now have to receive a C or better to earn credit in a course. This change is also in line with practices at several of the institutions listed above. Instead of failing, students who score below a C will now receive a grade of No Credit, which will function more like a withdrawal than an F on the transcript.

The third change is to increase student eligibility for taking courses on a CR/NC basis by opening them up to first-year students. Expanding access to the Credit/No Credit option will assist first-year students in managing their workload and encourage intellectual exploration.

The fourth change is to increase the kinds of courses that are eligible to be taken on a CR/NC basis. Currently, no major or minor eligible courses can be taken Pass/Fail. Under the new policy, students would be able to take major/minor eligible courses on a Credit/No Credit basis once they have satisfied the requirements using other courses. This, we hope, will encourage students to complete their requirements in a timely manner and to branch out into areas that

Back to top

would benefit them intellectually after they have done so. Additionally, under the new policy, students may be able to take courses that satisfy general education requirements (other than those designated "CORE") on a CR/NC basis.

Proposed New Policy

The following describes the proposed CR/NC policy in more detail. It uses, where applicable, the existing A&S policy language. Changes to current policy language or entirely new additions appear in **bold**.

1. **Credit/No Credit** rules, requirements, and deadlines are not petitionable.
2. A minimum of 12 graded credit hours is required. If a student drops a course and falls below 12 graded credit hours, the **CR/NC** course will be converted to a regular graded basis.
3. A graduating senior who has permission to take fewer than 12 hours on a graded basis may take one course on a **CR/NC** basis *in addition to the courses required for graduation*. If the student does not graduate at the end of that semester, the *CR* grade will be converted to the grade earned.
4. **All students, regardless of class standing, may register for courses on a CR/NC basis.**
5. Students may take one **Credit/No Credit** course per Semester. They may apply no more than twenty-four hours of **Credit/No Credit** courses toward their degree.
6. Students may elect the **Credit/No Credit** option or change a course from **Credit/No Credit** to graded status until the deadline for withdrawal for each term.
7. Students who are registered for a course on a **Credit/No Credit** basis must meet all course requirements (reports, papers, examinations, attendance, etc.) and are graded in the normal way. (Instructors are not informed of the names of students enrolled on a **Credit/No Credit** basis.)
8. **Any grade of C or above would be converted into the student's record system as a CR, and any grade lower than a C would convert into NC.**
9. **Neither a grade of Credit nor a grade of No Credit will affect a student's grade point average. Students who receive a NC are not awarded credit hours.**
10. **No courses with the prefix CORE may be taken on a Credit/No Credit basis. Courses tagged as satisfying capacity requirements may be taken on a Credit/No Credit basis.**
11. **Major/Minor-eligible courses may not be taken by declared Majors/Minors on a Credit/No Credit basis before the requirements for the major/minor have been completed. Students who have completed their major/minor requirements with other courses may take major/minor-eligible courses on a CR/NC basis.**
12. **Courses taken on a CR/NC basis will be changed into their assigned letter grade if they become part of the requirements for a student's major after the major is declared. If the student's assigned letter grade is lower than a C, then the NC grade will remain and the student must retake the course to satisfy the requirement.**
13. **No courses may retroactively be designated CR/NC.**

Back to top

REPORT OF THE WORLD LANGUAGES SUBCOMMITTEE

(Elsa Filosa, Lutz Koepnick, Michelle Murray, Daniel Solomon, Guojun Wang)

RATIONALE

Why do we need to learn a world language in Vanderbilt A&S?

The primary goal of a second-language requirement is intercultural competency. There are of course other benefits to making yourself understood in a foreign country, and learning a new language can even stimulate new neural pathways to make our students' brains more agile. But we submit that both of these outcomes are tangential: the primary goal of all instruction at Vanderbilt is real communication, which means not just speaking and writing, but also listening and processing. The latest estimate is that there are 419 million people in the world who grew up speaking English as their native language, which means that some 7.3 billion - 94.6 percent - did not. Even in our own College, the percentage of International Students is rising each year, currently at just over 10%, representing 92 different countries. A world-language requirement in A&S does not purport to teach a language to fluency—that is a life-long project—but it can teach the intrinsic value of learning a second language.

The Mission Statement of our College of Arts and Science is that *"we pursue both personal discovery and world-scale impact to address the most enduring challenges of our time. Through research, teaching, and service, we explore deeply, encourage curiosity, forge connections, and cross boundaries. We are informed by the art and inspired by the science of how the world works and what makes us human."* We submit that our new world-language proposal is central to that goal, insofar as it will offer all our undergraduates both the resources and the incentive to reach out to non-native speakers, both domestically and all over the world. Working solely with Google Translate and other automated tools curtails the humanity of the language experience: learning languages is a fundamental part of any humanistic inquiry. Machines can be incorporated into the classroom experience, but only in such a way as to expose their limitations in transmitting the richness and complexity of idiomatic expressions, for only humans can impart the fullness of the linguistic experience – tone, body language, gestures, and more. To cross boundaries, forge connections, and achieve a global impact, we need to give our students the keys to intercultural competency, through communication in a second language of their choice.

Why can't we just communicate in English, or through a translator?

Learning a new language entails a new way of looking at the world. A mother tongue is not taught in school; you develop it as an infant as soon as you interact with the world. It is formative, because as you learn, you process information and externalize it through language; it is thus a medium that helps us to make sense of the world and to communicate our response. Even introductory language courses are immersive in different environments, as students interact with products of the target culture through different kinds of media, and they can appreciate even at this early stage how fundamental assumptions can be informed by one's native language. This can play out through class projects framed around contemporary issues,

Back to top

which in this country may have assumed a familiar framework that has set the terms for the discussion, e.g., on gun control, or abortion, or public health care, but a world-language class can subtly convey how other countries have set new approaches and assumptions, without making it a polarizing debate on a hot button issue.

But the clearest benefits come from learning key terms that have no direct equivalent translation in English because of the cultural framework that underpins them. For example, in Italian, the closest term that corresponds to ours for “pet” is “domestic animal,” which sparks new conversations on the relationships we have with our family cats and dogs. In Latin, the term “virtus” can mean either its English derivative “ethical virtue” or a more gendered quality of “military valor” related to “virility,” depending on context. And in Korean, understanding the word “jung” in its linguistic matrix opens access to a distinctly Korean value; although the term has nuances of “friendship,” “bond,” and “duty,” it is untranslatable precisely because it conveys a national sense of belonging to a community. Even though these individual terms can be found in dictionaries that list all possible translations, our students cannot appreciate what they tell us about another culture until they are encountered repeatedly in full sentences in their native environment.

English as a filter detracts from the interpersonal experience because you are forcing a foreigner to communicate with you on your own terms. While the study of liberal arts in English can provide an initial introduction to different cultures, it is by definition secondhand. Such courses can train the mind to think critically, but language learning exposes us to different perspectives in a unique manner. It is not just that learning a world language makes our students more adaptable and employable in a global market; in fact, all participation in the global community proceeds more smoothly in attempting to understand and appreciate others in their own language. "Soft skills" such as communication skills, leadership attributes, an ability to work in teams, and an awareness and understanding of other cultures are now just as important as technical or professional knowledge in initiating and building a career. When we expect non-English speakers to learn English before we will have a conversation with them, the signal we send (whether consciously or not) is that we are devaluing their language and their culture. And even when we use a translator, we are interjecting a filter between ourselves and our interlocutor, so that the words we hear or read will not be theirs. Many of us already have a sense of what is lost when we read a poem in translation, which will always convey the poetic talents of the translator more than the qualities of the original; we submit that this happens any time one interacts with a non-native speaker in one’s own native tongue.

Anglocentrism has always been a blind spot in the American educational system, even when it has tried to address other aspects of its systemic racism; we are not asking Vanderbilt to be a pioneer or to require from our students more exposure to language instruction than almost any of our peer institutions. But our university has recently become more serious in its ambition to become a world-class center for research that prepares global citizens in a new age. In the words of Nelson Mandela, who knew what it was like to have your language and culture

Back to top

suppressed by an Anglocentric government, “If you talk to a man in a language he understands, that goes to his head. If you talk to him in his own language, that goes to his heart.”

What can you get in a two-semester curriculum language requirement?
More careful attention to self-expression. Beginning a new language in college, or even high school, is more challenging than just about any other subject, because there are few familiar building blocks upon which students can rely: students learn a completely new discourse that is mostly presented in the very terms of that discourse. But the struggle itself yields immediate benefits because students are forced to slow down and think critically about how to explain themselves with the limited vocabulary and rudimentary grammar that they have learned. When you take something for granted because you learn it inductively growing up, you can often afford to be sloppy and vague; transferring it to a new language hones your intentionality of communication. A two-semester sequence will then lay foundations to enable students to enroll in more advanced courses, at which point it becomes easier to participate in more natural conversation. As they begin to incorporate more complex forms of expression specific to that language, such as idioms and cultural metaphors, they recognize more and more differences in the ways people experience the world. Thus, understanding language in all its forms, styles, and uses ultimately leads to less prejudice and more constructive relationships even with others who speak your native tongue.

And a prerequisite of this skill is learning how to listen. It is not just that learning a new language opens up a new world of life experiences, it is more that when you speak someone else’s language, you have to put yourself in their shoes whether you like it or not. Whether our students want to start a new language from scratch, whether they want to improve their proficiency in a language they began in high school, or even whether they are heritage speakers who want to become fluent in the language of their parents, what these experiences all have in common is that they start by making you feel small, as you fumble and struggle to express yourself with words that do not yet feel like your own, and that is why this project can feel as scary as any required course for the pre-Medical School curriculum. Learning a new language is a true act of bravery, which requires every student to deal with making elementary mistakes in public, expecting to appear vulnerable on a regular basis in front of their peers.

A direct corollary is that the more we progress in the language, the more we develop empathy with those we consider “other” from us. The reason we insist on a two-semester sequence in order to demonstrate the first level of proficiency is that most students take that long to achieve a minimum comfort level of conversation, and so a lot of that first year consists of listening to native speakers - not just intellectuals or scholars or writers of textbooks, but a cross-section of society as they talk about themselves, their perspectives, their reactions, their daily lives. But the more students immerse themselves in this experience on a regular basis, the sooner they can realize that often, when we disagree about issues large and small, it is not just a function of personal politics, religion, or philosophy: often those disagreements are informed by our cultural background, the way we were brought up, what we learned in school and from other media specific to our linguistic environment. And once we can recognize those

Back to top

differences, we can more easily navigate them, instead of instinctively blaming others for being ignorant and wrong. Especially in a world increasingly dominated by social media and snap judgments, language learning imparts an essential skill of sensitivity, for introductory-level students have little choice but to pay attention to other viewpoints.

LANGUAGE REQUIREMENT AT PEER U.S. UNIVERSITIES

Among peer U.S. universities, language requirements are a norm (see chart below). In the schools ranked in the top 15 by *US News and World Report*, most institutions that have general education requirements (unlike Brown) and that are not focused on STEM (such as CalTech and MIT) have a language requirement; only Rice and Johns Hopkins do not. Further down the list, language requirements remain a standard in schools ranked 15-100 by *US News and World Report*. Again, nearly every institution that has requirements and is not focused on STEM (such as Georgia Tech, Colorado School of the Mines, and Stevens Institute of Technology) has a language requirement. Removing the requirement would effectively signal that the place of languages at Vanderbilt is below most R2 schools that are far lower ranked, such as Lehigh or American.

Diminishing the language requirement in any fashion also means that our students will compete in the job market without an important line in their resume, which will make our students weaker than those graduating from any other peer university.

PROPOSED NEW WORLD LANGUAGE REQUIREMENT

1. Students may fulfill the requirement in one of three ways:

A. Students with previous knowledge of a second language may take a placement test and then complete with a passing grade one second-language course numbered higher than their tested proficiency (see Table below).

- Students whose first language or language of instruction is not English may complete with a passing grade one course on Specialized English for Academics and Professionals (EAP) at the English Language Center;

B. Proficient students may alternatively complete with a passing grade one upper-level integrative language course that pre-requires second-language proficiency equal to or above two semesters of study;

- Students whose first language or language of instruction is not English may directly enroll in such courses without a placement test;

C. Students may begin a new language and complete it through the second-semester level.

Back to top

Students whose placement test indicated proficiency equivalent to fulfill the requirement with	
1st semester	2nd semester: 1102 or 1103 [= 1101 + 1102]
2nd semester	3rd semester: 2201
	[or FRE/ITA/PORT/SPA 2203]
3rd semester	4th semester: 2202
	[or FRE/ITA 2501W, ITA 2614, PORT 2205 or above]
4th semester or above	any course for which 4th-semester language is prerequisite

2. Pre-collegiate test scores, including AP and IB, will not be accepted in fulfillment of Vanderbilt A&S world-language requirements, even though they may be used for placement in the appropriate world-language course.

3. The College will introduce upper-level integrative and trans-institutional courses of multilingual education. Sample courses include:

- Data Science and Second-Language Learning (pilot project currently under development, Asian Studies and Data Science, VU)
- Multilingual Natural Language Processing (Carnegie Mellon open access course)
- Human Translation and Machine Translation (similar course offered at NYU Center for Applied Liberal Arts)
- Communication of Science and Technology with components (units) in languages other than English (Chinese, French, German, Japanese, Korean, Spanish, etc.)
- Multilingual Medical Internship (SPAN 3830 Spanish, Health, and Society, currently offered at VU; Shade Tree Clinic on campus offers translation internship opportunities; see A&S policy on internship for credits)
- Multilingual Approaches to Research Studies (see example at Children's Hospital of Philadelphia)
- Multilingual Surveys (may be developed by Political Science based on The Vanderbilt University Poll)
- Global Economics and Multilingualism (existing programs in Georgia Tech; St Lawrence; related courses at University of Groningen)
- Cultural Geography: Geography of World Languages (Stockholm University)
- Multilingual legal training and internship (FREN 3114, French for Law and Diplomacy in a Global Context, currently offered at Vanderbilt)
- Blair School of Music Courses (Voice Department, "Diction for Singers": English, Italian, German, French)
- Peabody Courses on Multilingualism (e.g., EDUC 6575 - Multimodality and Multilingualism)

Back to top

Note:

- To count for A&S world language requirements, such courses must pre-require second-language proficiency equal to or above two semesters of study and involve the study and application of multiple languages.
- These courses could be supported by Exploratory Core course development grants or through the Provost Course Improvement Grant program.
- Such courses in A&S will prioritize enrollment from A&S students.
- Such courses may be individually or team-taught following the model of the "Big Question" courses; the College will be encouraged to hire postdoctoral fellows specializing in multilingualism and student teaching assistants to develop and teach new courses, as necessary.

CAPACITIES

Cultural and Interpretive Investigation (C) for all introductory/intermediate courses except 1101, which will carry no capacity designation, as is currently the case under AXLE. Upper-level courses (3000-level and above) may be tagged differently according to their main topics.

TRANSCRIPT "PROFICIENCY NOTATION"

Advanced Language proficiency translates into numerous benefits for our students, particularly as they seek out careers in an increasingly global world. We believe that extraordinary proficiency should be signaled on student transcripts; in most cases students should be eligible upon completion of two courses numbered 3000 or above whose primary language of instruction is not English.

FINANCIAL SUPPORT FOR LANGUAGE IMMERSION ON CAMPUS AND ABROAD

The committee recommends a series of steps to encourage language immersion:

- Build financial support for Immersive learning in world languages, such as language tables, residential dorm activities, and language ambassadors on campus;
- Solicit McTyeire alumni to fund fellowships for study-abroad language programs;
- Create fellowships for study-abroad language programs for A&S students with second-semester proficiency or above in the target language; explore pairing internships for these programs;
- Develop courses that embed a study-away, immersive experience during Spring or Thanksgiving Break. Structure the travel component and fees so that student financial aid covers the cost of travel (see, for example, ASIA 3363: Field Investigations).

STANDARDIZATION OF LANGUAGE REQUIREMENTS

We acknowledge that no single solution will fit all languages, but we encourage language departments to coordinate via the Vanderbilt Center for Languages to increase both transparency and consistency in requirements, pedagogies, and placement tests where appropriate.

Back to top

TRANSFER STUDENTS

Students who transfer into A&S in their sophomore year should be held to the same requirements as all other A&S students; if they completed the requisite level of language at their previous institution, it will be accepted after being vetted for equivalency. Students who transfer in their junior or senior year will be exempt, as long as they fulfilled the World Language requirement at their previous institution; if not, then they will be held to the same requirements as all other A&S students.

DISABILITY ACCOMMODATION

Students with a disability that unduly hinders their ability to succeed in a second-language course may petition for an exemption. They must be evaluated by Vanderbilt Student Access Services, and if so recommended, they may fulfill the requirement by completing an extra course tagged with a "Cultural and Interpretive Investigation" capacity.

LANGUAGES OFFERED AT VANDERBILT UNIVERSITY

Students can fulfill their requirement in the following languages:

Akkadian, Ancient Greek, Arabic, Catalan, Chinese, Classical Hebrew, English as a Second Language, French, German, Haitian Creole, Hebrew, Hindi Urdu, Italian, Japanese, K'iche', Korean, Latin, Portuguese, Russian, Sanskrit, Spanish, Swahili, and Turkish.

World Languages at Top U.S. Universities

INSTITUTION	PROFICIENCY REQUIREMENT	TEST-OUT OPTIONS	DISTRIBUTION CATEGORY	INTERNATIONAL STUDENT OPTION	OTHER COMMENTS
Vanderbilt	2nd semester	AP 4-5; IB 6-7 HL; test in Latin, or through TLC	"International Cultures"	none	
Harvard	2nd semester: must be satisfied by Junior Year.	AP 5; IB 7 HL; some languages offer test		May be waived if majority of high school was abroad and not in English.	Students who carry on language beyond Introductory level may qualify for a "citation" in that language.
Stanford	2nd semester. Language courses can be taken PF.	AP 4-5; IB HL 5-7; NEWL 4-5		May be waived with 10 years of schooling abroad and not in English.	Advanced knowledge of a language can qualify for a "proficiency notation" on transcript, after diagnostic written and oral examinations.
Chicago	2nd semester	AP 5; IB 5 SL or HL Students can apply for a test only if placed into 3rd semester.		May be waived with "formal schooling experience" abroad and not in English.	Advanced students may apply for "Practical" or "Advanced" proficiency certificates and/or "Global Honors" program.
Berkeley	2nd semester	AP 3; IB 5 SL or HL; some languages offer test	"Essential Skills" with Writing and Quantitative Reasoning	May be waived if 3 years of schooling were abroad and not in English.	
Emory	2nd semester beyond previous experience.	AP 5; IB 5 SL or HL: must then take a second semester in college.	"Intercultural Communication"	none	New for class of 2027: main change was "beyond student's level of fluency."

Back to top

Dartmouth	3rd semester of HS language, or 2nd semester new.	NONE: must take 1-3 semesters in college, depending on placement		none	New for Class of 2026 (test-out option removed in new curriculum)
Yale	3rd semester	NONE: must take 1-3 semesters in college, depending on placement		Specific English courses, OR one upper-level course in native language, OR 2 semesters of new language.	
Cornell	3rd semester	NONE: must take 1-3 semesters in college, depending on placement		May be waived for HS not in English	
Duke	3rd semester	NONE: must take 1-3 semesters in college, depending on placement		Either new language, or advanced class in native language	Emphasis on cultural literacy and intercultural understanding.
Penn	4th semester	College test		none	may not be used to fulfill any other General Education Requirement.
Princeton	4th semester	AP 5; IB 7 HL			
Columbia	4th semester	College test		Waived for HS not in English	must be completed to study abroad, even if program is English
NYU	4th semester	AP 4-5; IB HL 6-7; college test		Waived for HS not in English, or completion of International Writing Workshop.	
Northwestern	4th semester	AP 4-5; IB HL 6-7; college test		May be waived for HS not in English.	Changed in 2023; language requirement unchanged.
Georgetown	4th semester	College test			Some languages are offered only on an intensive track.
Notre Dame	4th semester	NONE: must take 1-4 semesters in college, depending on placement			Changed in 2018 to add 4th semester language. Both BA and BS require some foreign language courses. Others highly recommend it.

- MIT, Brown, CalTech, Rice, Hopkins: no World Language Requirement
- Wash U: either 3 semesters of foreign language or 4 semesters of “Linguistic and Cultural Diversity” courses in English

Back to top

XII. APPENDICES

I. AXLE Requirements
II. Committee Membership
III. Detailed Committee Timeline
IV. Engagement and Outreach Efforts
V. Surveys

Back to top

AXLE Requirements

A summary of AXLE requirements is provided below, with a more detailed version available here. The website includes distribution category descriptions and information regarding placement testing for writing and language courses.

To complete AXLE takes a minimum of 42-45 credit hours, of 120 total credit hours required for graduation.

AXLE: Achieving eXcellence in Liberal Education

Writing Requirement
4 courses (English Composition, First-Year Writing Seminar, and 2 W courses,
one of which may be an oral communication course)

Liberal Arts Requirement

13 courses from at least 7 departments in 6 categories:

- Humanities & the Creative Arts (3)
- International Cultures (3)
    - one must be a second-semester or higher language acquisition class
- History & Culture of the United States (1)
- Mathematics and Natural Sciences (3)
    - one must be a lecture and lab combination
- Social and Behavioral Sciences (2)

- Perspectives (1)

Back to top

Committee Membership, Future of the A&S Curriculum

STEERING COMMITTEE

- Sarah Igo (Chair), Dean of Strategic Initiatives, College of Arts and Science; Andrew Jackson Professor of History; affiliated faculty in Law, Political Science, Sociology, Communication of Science and Technology, Medicine, Health and Society
- Cynthia Brame, Assistant Professor of the Practice of Biological Sciences; former Associate Director, Center for Teaching
- Amy Johnson, Assistant Provost of Experiential Learning and Undergraduate Affairs; Professor of the Practice in American Studies
- Lutz Koepnick, Max Kade Foundation Chair in German Studies; Professor of Cinema and Media Arts; Director, Comparative Media Analysis Center
- Mario Rewers, Research Associate, Senior Lecturer in American Studies
- Daniel Coradazzi, Senior Executive Coordinator, A&S Dean's Office

FACULTY COMMITTEE

- Scott Aikin, Philosophy (Spring 2022 only)
- Sophie Bjork-James, Anthropology/Religious Studies
- Brandon Byrd, History
- Celina Callahan-Kapoor, Medicine, Health & Society
- Kitt Carpenter, Public Policy Studies/Economics
- Liz Catania, Neuroscience
- Lily Claiborne, Earth & Environmental Sciences
- Larisa DeSantis, Biological Sciences
- Elsa Filosa, French & Italian
- Jonathan Gilligan, Earth & Environmental Sciences
- Alfredo Gurrola, Physics
- Jon Hiskey, Political Science/Sociology
- Jessie Hock, English
- Alex Jacobs, American Studies
- Shaul Kelner, Sociology/Jewish Studies
- Leah Lowe, Theatre
- Mike Mihalik, Mathematics
- Elizabeth Moodey, History of Art and Architecture
- Ole Molvig, Communication of Science and Technology/History
- Michelle Murray, Spanish & Portuguese/European Studies
- Jonathan Rattner, Cinema & Media Arts/Art
- Rupi Saggi, Economics
- Adriane Seiffert, Psychology
- Stacy Simplican, Gender & Sexuality Studies

Back to top

- Daniel Solomon, Classical and Mediterranean Studies
- Paul Stob, Communication Studies/American Studies
- Claudine Taaffe, African American and Diaspora Studies
- Steve Townsend, Chemistry
- Guojun Wang, Asian Studies
- Michelle Young, Anthropology

Subcommittees

Fall 2022 Capacity Committees:

- Reading, Writing, Communicating – Moodey, Jacobs, Hock, Mihalik, Solomon, Townsend
- Information, Data, Media Analysis – Catania, DeSantis, Gilligan, Seiffert, Rattner, Stob, Thrower
- Civic and Ethical Engagement – Hiskey, Kelner, Lowe, Murray, Saggi, Young
- Dialogue Across Differences – Byrd, Callahan-Kapoor, Carpenter, Simplican, Taaffe
- Research, Exploration, Discovery – Bjork-James, Claiborne, Gurrola, Molvig, Wang

Fall 2022 Standing Committees:

- Data Gathering – Carpenter, Coradazzi, Filosa, Gurrola, Simplican, Thrower, Wang, Young
- Communications – Callahan-Kapoor, Claiborne, Hock, Igo, Lowe, Rewers, Solomon, Townsend
- Pedagogies – Bjork-James, Brame, Gilligan, Jacobs, Kelner, Mihalik, Seiffert
- College Core – Byrd, Catania, Claiborne, Hiskey, Igo, Murray, Saggi, Stob
- Course Load & Calendar – DeSantis, Molvig, Moodey, Johnson, Rattner, Taaffe, Young

Spring 2023 Subcommittees:

- Core A (Course and Program Development) – Catania, Igo, Lowe, Stob
- Core B (Faculty Support and Resources) – Byrd, Igo, Hiskey, Saggi
- Academic Policy and Advising – Jacobs, Johnson, Kelner, Simplican, Thrower
- Learning Outcomes – Brame, Callahan-Kapoor, Moodey, Seiffert, Young
- Natural Sciences – Brame, DeSantis, Gurrola, Mihalik, Townsend
- World Languages – Filosa, Koepnick, Murray, Solomon, Wang
- Majors, Departments, and Pathways – Carpenter, Gilligan, Hock, Koepnick, Taaffe
- Immersion and Badging – Bjork-James, Claiborne, Johnson, Molvig, Rattner

Back to top

Detailed Committee Timeline

Spring 2022

- Working Groups discuss fundamental questions and issues:
    - What is college for? What is the purpose of an undergraduate education? How do we define the liberal arts? What pressures do they face? What has changed—in terms of our students, Vanderbilt, educational philosophies, and the world—since 2004? What assumptions about how and what we teach need examining? What alternative curricular models should we examine?
- Faculty of different ranks and disciplines divide into three intentionally diverse and cross-cutting working groups of 10 to ensure interdisciplinary, intersectional dialogue.
- Research by Working Groups and the Steering Committee includes: creation of a research library; fact-finding on AXLE and the broader curriculum; a survey of first- and second-year students on course selection; institutional research with the Office of Data and Strategic Analytics; consultations with experts in curricular reform; study of alternative models.
- Outreach efforts by the Steering Committee include visits to A&S departments and programs, Directors of Undergraduate Studies divisional meetings, and consultations with the Vanderbilt Student Government, the CAS Undergraduate Advisory Board, the Faculty Council, the Associate Deans of Blair, Engineering, and Peabody, and the College of Arts and Science Board of Advisors.

Summer 2022

- Reading Groups form on higher education trends.
- Steering Committee retreat.
- External consultation with Dan Edelstein, Stanford University.

Fall 2022

- The Steering Committee provides updates at Faculty Meetings, the Faculty Council, and Chairs & Directors meetings and continues outreach efforts by organizing Open Houses, public talks, and advisory meetings with students, alumni, and other undergraduate colleges.
- Detailed undergraduate survey of AXLE launched.
- Assessment of potential reforms: stronger “core” and common intellectual experience; emphasis on exploration, including expanded p/f options; shift to four-course, four-credit norm; focus on capacities and modes of inquiry versus disciplines; clearer pathways between general and specialized study
- Day-long retreat at the Wond’ry to summarize and build on fall semester work.
- Ongoing meetings with key stakeholders (e.g., undergraduates, faculty, A&S Board of Advisors, Registrar’s Office, Provost’s Office, Deans of other undergraduate schools/colleges, and Faculty Heads of residential colleges).

Back to top

Spring 2023

- New committees form: Core courses and implementation, learning outcomes, majors and pathways, natural sciences, world languages, immersion and badging, and academic policy.
- Draft and revise proposals for the Core and Capacities.
- Visit every A&S department and program to share draft proposals and solicit feedback.
- Ongoing communications and outreach via Faculty meetings, Faculty Council meetings, Chairs and Directors meetings, student advisory group, newsletters, and public talks (Paul Hanstedt, Roosevelt Montás).
- Design potential governance plan for the Core Office, including leadership and staffing.
- Recruit and work with faculty in pilot program to set syllabi for Fall 2023 Core pilots.
- Prepare materials and report for faculty vote.

Summer 2023 (if positive faculty vote)

- Design new curriculum graphics and materials.
- Establish 4-college committee to ensure smooth transition from AXLE to new Core.
- Meet with Registrar, Communications, Admissions, and CASPAR staff to review changes.
- Launch departmental conversations/workshops on new curriculum.
- Plan for changes in department leadership and teaching loads, including course replacements.
- Propose faculty recruitment and hiring plans for additional staffing.

Fall 2023 (if positive faculty vote)

- Establish Core leadership and faculty committee responsible for: Core course design and common readings; Core Teaching and Learning Community; co-curricular events planning; communications; assessment; advising
- Pilot 21 first-year Core courses through First-Year Writing Seminar program.
- Recruit faculty for First-Year Core via nomination, individual meetings, and open houses.

Spring 2024 (if positive faculty vote)

- Finalize communications plan for incoming students.
- Submit courses and scheduling to Registrar's Office by March 1.
- Academic advisor training.
- Review Core staffing and fill any FTEs.
- First round of proposals and course grants for Core electives.
- Finalize co-curricular programming.
- Teaching and Learning Community (May) for faculty teaching in the Core.

Summer 2024 (if positive faculty vote)

- Incoming first-year students undergo advising in new requirements.
- Collect feedback re: recurring questions or concerns.
- Continued collaboration with key stakeholders and Commons Faculty Heads.

Back to top

Fall 2024 (if positive faculty vote): ***launch of new curriculum***

- Workshop series for Directors of Undergraduate Studies to discuss new curriculum and advising students in the Core and outgoing AXLE.
- Continue to recruit faculty for Core teaching.
- "Big Question" pilot program begins.

Back to top

Engagement and Outreach Efforts

The Future of the A&S Curriculum (FASC) met biweekly in Spring 2022 and weekly during academic year 2022-2023. Its members convened as a full committee on 24 occasions, including at an all-day retreat in Fall 2022, and 39 times in subcommittees. The Steering Committee met a total of 32 times over three semesters, also taking part in a two-day retreat in the summer of 2022. In total, the committee met 97 times between January 2022 and May 2023.

In addition, FASC planned a host of outreach efforts, including individual meetings, surveys, feedback sessions, open houses, and consultations with different constituencies and offices on campus. In the last three semesters we have held over 160 meetings about the proposed curriculum reform, including two rounds of department and program visits. The steering committee formed an undergraduate curriculum advisory board and met frequently with this group to solicit curricular feedback and test designs.

The committee also hosted two visits and public talks from prominent experts on curriculum development: Dr. Paul Hanstedt and Dr. Roosevelt Montás. Finally, members of FASC traveled to Purdue University and Stanford University to learn more about those institutions' recently-introduced core programs, hearing directly from faculty, post-doctoral scholars, undergraduate students, and administrators about specific features and merits of their general education models.

What follows is not a complete list, but our best accounting of the committee's engagement and outreach efforts since January 2022. Not captured here are some of the early meetings of faculty subcommittees with various campus offices—and many more one-on-one conversations between committee members and faculty members on specific topics and concerns.

Person, Office or Organization	Date	Group	Semester
Vanderbilt Student Government, Ac Affairs	11/7/2021	Students	Fall 2021
A&S Undergraduate Advisory Board	11/7/2021	Students	Fall 2021
Meeting on AXLE: K. Daniels, D. Weintraub	12/13/2021	Faculty	Fall 2021
A&S Faculty Meeting	1/18/2022	Faculty	Spring 2022
Data and Strategic Analytics - AXLE Data	3/2/2022	Administration/Staff	Spring 2022
Department Meeting - ART	3/18/2022	Faculty	Spring 2022
Department Meeting - CHEM	3/18/2022	Faculty	Spring 2022
Department Meeting - CMA	3/18/2022	Faculty	Spring 2022
Department Meeting - CLACX	3/21/2022	Faculty	Spring 2022
Department Meeting - JS	3/21/2022	Faculty	Spring 2022
Department Meeting - EES	3/23/2022	Faculty	Spring 2022
Directors of UG Studies - Social Sciences	3/24/2022	Faculty	Spring 2022
Directors of UG Studies - Natural Sciences	3/24/2022	Faculty	Spring 2022
CAS Board of Advisors	3/24/2022	Alumni	Spring 2022
CAS Board of Advisors	3/25/2022	Alumni	Spring 2022
Department Meeting - BUSI	3/28/2022	Faculty	Spring 2022
Department Meeting - PSYC	3/28/2022	Faculty	Spring 2022

Back to top

Department Meeting – PHYS	3/28/2022	Faculty	Spring 2022
Directors of UG Studies - Humanities	3/29/2022	Faculty	Spring 2022
Vanderbilt Student Government, Ac Affairs	3/31/2022	Students	Spring 2022
Department Meeting - BSCI	4/1/2022	Faculty	Spring 2022
Department Meeting - SPAN/PORT	4/4/2022	Faculty	Spring 2022
Department Meeting - PSCI	4/6/2022	Faculty	Spring 2022
Department Meeting - HIST	4/18/2022	Faculty	Spring 2022
Department Meeting - AADS	4/19/2022	Faculty	Spring 2022
Department Meeting - MHS	4/19/2022	Faculty	Spring 2022
Department Meeting - CLAMS	4/20/2022	Faculty	Spring 2022
Department Meeting - GSS	4/22/2022	Faculty	Spring 2022
Department Meeting - SOCI	4/22/2022	Faculty	Spring 2022
Department Meeting - GREES	4/22/2022	Faculty	Spring 2022
Department Meeting - PHIL	4/28/2022	Faculty	Spring 2022
Department Meeting - THTR	4/29/2022	Faculty	Spring 2022
Department Meeting - COMM	5/3/2022	Faculty	Spring 2022
Facilities & Building Operations	5/4/2022	Staff/Administration	Spring 2022
CASPAR (Academic Advising Staff)	5/5/2022	Academic Advisers	Spring 2022
A&S Faculty Meeting	5/10/2022	Faculty	Spring 2022
Accreditation Office – Eric Cummings	5/16/2022	Administration	Spring 2022
Course Selection Survey - 1st/2nd Year	5/18/2022	Students	Spring 2022
Writing Center – John Bradley	5/24/2022	Faculty	Summer 2022
Digital Humanities	6/22/2022	Faculty	Summer 2022
CASPAR (Academic Advising Staff)	6/23/2022	Staff/Administration	Summer 2022
Academic Advising	8/18/2022	Administration	Fall 2022
AI and Computing	8/24/2022	Faculty	Fall 2022
Office of Undergrad Ed– Course Scheduling	9/1/2022	Administration	Fall 2022
Center for Teaching	9/8/2022	Administration	Fall 2022
University Registrar's Office: Bart Quinet	9/13/2022	Administration	Fall 2022
A&S Faculty Meeting	9/20/2022	Faculty	Fall 2022
Subcommittee w/CASPAR, Undergrad Ed	9/23/2023	Administration	Fall 2022
Faculty Lounge: Curriculum Focus	10/5/2022	Faculty	Fall 2022
CAS Board of Advisors	10/6/2022	Alumni	Fall 2022
CAS Board of Advisors	10/7/2022	Alumni	Fall 2022
Undergraduate Associate Deans, 4 Colleges	10/10/2022	Administration	Fall 2022
A&S Faculty Meeting	10/18/2022	Faculty	Fall 2022
Open House	10/20/2022	All	Fall 2022
Chairs & Directors Meeting	10/25/2022	Faculty	Fall 2022
Office of Undergraduate Education	10/26/2022	Administration	Fall 2022
Libraries	11/1/2022	Faculty/Staff	Fall 2022
Residential Colleges - Upper-division	11/2/2022	Residential Colleges	Fall 2022
Registrar and Accreditation Office	11/3/2022	Administration	Fall 2022
Vanderbilt Student Government – Ac Affairs	11/4/2022	Students	Fall 2022
Faculty Council	11/8/2022	Faculty	Fall 2022
Open House	11/9/2022	All	Fall 2022
Undergraduate Curriculum Advisory	11/14/2022	Students	Fall 2022
Undergraduate Curriculum Advisory	11/15/2022	Students	Fall 2022
Deans of 4 Undergraduate Colleges	10/28/2022	Administration	Fall 2022

Back to top

Purdue Visit (11/10-11/11)	11/10/2022	External	Fall 2022
Undergraduate Associate Deans, 4 Colleges	11/28/2022	Administration	Fall 2022
Alex Sevilla, Career Center	11/28/2022	Administration	Fall 2022
Directors of Undergraduate Studies	11/29/2022	Faculty	Fall 2022
Career Center: Alayna Hayes, Alex Sevilla	12/5/2022	Administration	Fall 2022
A&S Faculty Meeting	12/6/2022	Faculty	Fall 2022
Vanderbilt Student Government – Ac Affairs	12/8/2022	Students	Fall 2022
Center for Teaching: Joe Bandy	12/14/2022	Administration	Fall 2022
A&S Registration	1/4/2023	Administration	Spring 2023
Undergraduate Curriculum Advisory	1/17/2023	Students	Spring 2023
Stanford Planning	1/20/2023	External	Spring 2023
Department Meeting - HIST	1/23/2023	Faculty	Spring 2023
Subcommittee w/Undergrad Associate Deans	1/23/203	Faculty	Spring 2023
Subcommittee w/Melissa Mallon (Library)	1/23/2023	Faculty	Spring 2023
Department Meeting - JS	1/24/2023	Faculty	Spring 2023
Chairs & Directors Meeting	1/24/2023	Faculty	Spring 2023
Subcommittee w/OAPRAA	1/25/2023	Administration	Spring 2023
Subcommittee w/Center for Teaching	1/25/2023	Faculty	Spring 2023
Department Meeting - EES	1/26/2023	Faculty	Spring 2023
Department Meeting - ASIA	1/26/2023	Faculty	Spring 2023
Paul Hanstedt - Planning	1/26/2023	Faculty	Spring 2023
Department Meeting - CMA	1/27/2023	Faculty	Spring 2023
Department Meeting - GSS	1/30/2023	Faculty	Spring 2023
Department Meeting – PHYS	1/30/2023	Faculty	Spring 2023
Stanford Visit (1/31-2/3)	1/31/2023	External	Spring 2023
Department Meeting - AADS	2/6/2023	Faculty	Spring 2023
Department Meeting - SPAN/PORT	2/6/2023	Faculty	Spring 2023
Subcommittee w/STEM Success	2/6/2023	Faculty	Spring 2023
Undergraduate Curriculum Advisory	2/7/2023	Students	Spring 2023
Department Meeting - MHS	2/7/2023	Faculty	Spring 2023
Department Meeting - ECON	2/7/2023	Faculty	Spring 2023
Department Meeting - ENGL	2/8/2023	Faculty	Spring 2023
Subcommittee w/Student Care Network	2/7/2023	Administration	Spring 2023
Residential Faculty - Commons	2/8/2023	Faculty	Spring 2023
Department Meeting - CLAMS	2/9/2023	Faculty	Spring 2023
Department Meeting - FRIT	2/9/2023	Faculty	Spring 2023
Department Meeting - THTR	2/10/2023	Faculty	Spring 2023
Undergraduate Curriculum Advisory	2/10/2023	Students	Spring 2023
Subcommittee w/ John Bradley, Writing Center	2/13/2023	Faculty	Spring 2023
Department Meeting - SOCI	2/13/2023	Faculty	Spring 2023
Department Meeting - PSCI	2/15/2023	Faculty	Spring 2023
Pilot Interest Session	2/15/2023	Faculty	Spring 2023
Subcommittee w/Language Faculty	2/15/2023	Faculty	Spring 2023
Department Meeting - PHIL	2/16/2023	Faculty	Spring 2023
Department Meeting - GREES	2/16/2023	Faculty	Spring 2023
Department Meeting - ART	2/17/2023	Faculty	Spring 2023
Department Meeting - CHEM	2/17/2023	Faculty	Spring 2023
Department Meeting - PSYC	2/20/2023	Faculty	Spring 2023

Back to top

Undergraduate Curriculum Advisory	2/21/2023	Students	Spring 2023
Department Meeting - CSET	2/21/2023	Faculty	Spring 2023
A&S Faculty Meeting	2/21/2023	Faculty	Spring 2023
Deans of 4 Undergraduate Colleges	2/22/2023	Administration	Spring 2023
Vanderbilt *Hustler*	2/22/2023	Students	Spring 2023
Open House	2/23/2023	Faculty	Spring 2023
Subcommittee w/Language Faculty	2/27/2023	Faculty	Spring 2023
Department Meeting - MATH	2/23/2023	Faculty	Spring 2023
Department Meeting - BUSI	2/27/2023	Faculty	Spring 2023
Hanstedt Public Talk	2/27/2023	Public	Spring 2023
Hanstedt Dinner	2/27/2023	Faculty	Spring 2023
Department Meeting - ENGL Follow-Up	2/28/2023	Faculty	Spring 2023
Chairs & Directors Meeting	2/28/2023	Faculty	Spring 2023
Department Meeting - RLST	3/1/2023	Faculty	Spring 2023
Anita Wager/Peabody UAD	3/1/2023	Administration	Spring 2023
Pilot Dinner and Survey	3/1/2023	Students	Spring 2023
Department Meeting - ANTH	3/2/2023	Faculty	Spring 2023
Natural Sciences Chairs	3/2/2023	Faculty	Spring 2023
Department Meeting - HART	3/2/2023	Faculty	Spring 2023
Department Meeting - BSCI	3/3/2023	Faculty	Spring 2023
Open House	3/6/2023	Faculty	Spring 2023
Subcommittee w/Alex Sevilla	3/6/2023	Administration	Spring 2023
Undergraduate Curriculum Advisory	3/7/2023	Students	Spring 2023
Faculty Council	3/7/2023	Faculty	Spring 2023
Business Minor Faculty	3/8/2023	Faculty	Spring 2023
Office of Undergraduate Education	3/8/2023	Faculty	Spring 2023
Subcommittee w/Center for Languages	3/9/2023	Faculty	Spring 2023
NTT Council	3/9/2023	Faculty	Spring 2023
A&S Faculty Meeting	3/21/2023	Faculty	Spring 2023
Blair Faculty and AXLE courses	3/21/2023	Faculty	Spring 2023
Pilot Instructor Meeting	3/22/2023	Faculty	Spring 2023
Pilot Instructor Meeting	3/23/2023	Faculty	Spring 2023
Open House	3/23/2023	Faculty	Spring 2023
Undergraduate Associate Deans	3/27/2023	Administration	Spring 2023
Chairs & Directors Meeting	3/28/2023	Faculty	Spring 2023
Open House	3/29/2023	Staff/Administration	Spring 2023
Meeting with Data & Strategic Analytics	4/7/2023	Faculty	Spring 2023
Formal Curriculum Presentation: Draft Proposal	4/11/2023	Faculty	Spring 2023
Core Pilot Meeting	4/11/2023	Faculty	Spring 2023
Formal Curriculum Presentation: Draft Proposal	4/12/2023	Faculty	Spring 2023
Open House	4/13/2023	Faculty	Spring 2023
Core Pilot Instructors Meeting	4/13/2023	Faculty	Spring 2023
Montás Student Lunch	4/14/2023	Students	Spring 2023
Montás Public Talk	4/14/2023	Public	Spring 2023
Montás Dinner	4/14/2023	Faculty	Spring 2023
Open House	4/17/2023	Faculty	Spring 2023
A&S Faculty Meeting	4/18/2023	Faculty	Spring 2023
Open House	4/19/2023	Faculty	Spring 2023

Back to top

Continuing Track Council	4/19/2023	Faculty	Spring 2023
Continuing Track Council	4/20/2023	Faculty	Spring 2023
A&S Faculty Meeting: Revised Proposal	4/24/2023	Faculty	Spring 2023
A&S Faculty Meeting: Revised Proposal	4/25/2023	Faculty	Spring 2023
Department Meeting – English	4/25/2023	Faculty	Spring 2023
A&S Faculty Meeting	5/9/2023	Faculty	Spring 2023

Back to top

Surveys

Back to top

I. Intra-University Transfer (IUT) Application Review
March 14, 2023

In academic year 2021-2022, a total of 203 A&S students completed Intra-University Transfer (IUT) applications: 153 transferred to Peabody College, and 50 to the School of Engineering (SOE). In Fall 2022, 263 students completed IUT (186 to Peabody, 77 to SOE). In total, 466 students transferred out of A&S over three semesters (339 to Peabody, 203 to SOE).

Over three semesters, a total of 82 students transferred into CAS from the three undergraduate schools (7 from Blair, 29 from Peabody, 46 from SOE)

Each response was reviewed and could have multiple data points (i.e., the response could include both pursuing a major in HOD and a comment about Advanced Placement scores).

Summary: A&S Attrition by School

	Peabody	SOE	Total
21-22	153	50	203
Fall 2022	186	77	263
Total	339	127	466

A&S Attrition by Category

Overall	2021-2022	21-22 %	Fall 2022	Fall 2022 %	Total	Total %
Major: Pursuing a specific major	166	58.9	55	18.8	221	38.5
Career: Improved career outcomes	38	13.5	93	31.8	131	22.8
AXLE: A&S inflexible; PBDY/SOE flexible	41	14.5	68	23.3	109	19.0
Major: housed in other college	13	4.6	50	17.1	63	11.0
Capstone projects	12	4.3	14	4.8	26	4.5
AP credit policies	8	2.8	8	2.7	16	2.8
Increased resources	4	1.4	4	1.4	8	1.4
	282		292		574	

A&S to Peabody

Peabody	2021-2022	Fall 2022	Total	%
Major: Pursuing a specific major	140	45.0	185	42.5
Career: Improved career outcomes	24	59.0	83	19.1
AXLE: A&S inflexible; PBDY flexible	30	47.0	77	17.7
Major: housed in other college	7	42.0	49	11.3
Capstone projects	12	14.0	26	6.0
AP credit policies	3	5.0	8	1.8
Increased resources	3	4.0	7	1.6

Back to top

A&S to Engineering

ENG	2021-2022	Fall 2022	Total	%
Career: Improved career outcomes	14	34.0	48	34.5
Major: Pursuing a specific major	26	10.0	36	25.9
AXLE: A&S inflexible; SOE flexible	11	21.0	32	23.0
Major: housed in other college	6	8.0	14	10.1
AP credit policies	5	3.0	8	5.8
Increased resources	1	0.0	1	0.7

KEY FINDINGS

- **30% of students identified the current general education requirement as a principal reason for their departure from A&S.** This was determined by qualitative coding (e.g. comments indicating that AXLE is too cumbersome, 19%, and that there is a direct benefit to making their primary major outside of A&S, 11%). Students transferring to Peabody and the School of Engineering listed a primary benefit of the move as being governed by those schools' liberal arts core requirements rather than AXLE requirements.
- **23% of students identified (perceived) improved career outcomes as a reason to pursue a major in another academic school or college.** Many reported getting advice from peers and recent alumni about the ease of other programs and cited the ability to articulate the skills gained from participating in those programs. This further highlights the need for A&S to underscore and better communicate the value of the liberal arts.
- **The two most popular majors to transfer into were Human and Organizational Development (142) and Computer Science (27).** These two majors were perceived as "lucrative," "easy to understand," and recommended by peers.
- Finally, some responses indicate that **non-A&S community members** (i.e. career advisors, coaches, academic advisors in graduate programs, etc.) **have minimal knowledge of A&S and its various disciplines**. Students shared that they were directed to pursue non-A&S programs by those individuals. The new A&S Core will call for renewal and reinvestment in academic advising to remedy this problem and to make clearer to students the multiple benefits and pathways through A&S.

STUDENT QUOTES

- "When I went to the career center, the advisor listened to my worries about feeling limited with CAS and immediately recommended the HOD major." (Sophomore transferring to HOD.)
- "By pursuing a degree in Peabody College, I will make Peabody my home college, allowing for a more effective allocation of my credits and making my aspirations more feasible." (Sophomore with primary major in HOD, second major in Economics.)

Back to top

- “If I had majored in Peabody I would have been done with the majority of my LibCore requirements on day 1. If I had majored in Engineering, I would have fulfilled all of the requirements on day 1. This rule pushed people out of A&S. So many people add second majors in CS, Engineering Science, HOD, or CogStudies just because it means that they can claim Engineering/Peabody as their home school and get out of AXLE.” (Junior with primary major in Computer Science, second major in CSET.)

Back to top

II. Course Selection Survey
Spring 2022

The Future of the Arts & Science Curriculum Committee, in collaboration with the Office of Data and Strategic Analytics (DSA), designed a survey for first and second-year students to inquire about priorities during course registration. The survey was designed to get a better sense of behavioral patterns in course choice, enabling students to identify the number of courses they took and the primary reasons for selecting those courses.

Respondent profile

Academic Level	n	%
Freshman	291	51
Sophomore	260	43
Transfer - SO	24	4
Transfer - JR	10	2
	585	

Division	Count	%
Undeclared	297	52
Humanities	50	9
Natural Sciences	99	17
Social Sciences	127	22

Status	Count	%
Domestic students	517	88
International students	68	12

Status	Count	%
First Gen	48	8
Non First-Gen	527	92

The survey prepopulated students' attempted courses for Spring 2021. Respondents could select up to two priorities per course. Below is a table that outlines participant tagging of their courses by the provided list of priorities. Table is organized in descending order by greatest percentage of responses.

Priority for Course Selection	%
Needed for intended major	44
Days or times fit schedule well	41
Fulfills an AXLE requirement	39
Curious about the topic	27
Fulfilled a prerequisite	23
Was a brand-new subject	20
To explore a possible major	15
Counted for a preprofessional track	15
Would help GPA	13
Counts for more than one major/minor	13
Because of a particular instructor	13
Was a lab that accompanied a course	10
Peer recommended	7
Counted for another (non-A&S) requirement	7

Back to top

Percentage response rates broken down by class standing.

	Percentage by student group			
Priority for Course Selection	First-Year	Sophomore	Transfer	**Overall**
Needed for intended major	38	50	46	**44**
Days or times fit schedule well	39	41	48	**41**
Fulfills an AXLE requirement	47	29	42	**39**
Curious about the topic	28	26	37	**27**
Fulfilled a prerequisite	25	20	21	**23**
Was a brand-new subject	20	20	20	**20**
To explore a possible major	18	12	13	**15**
Counted for a preprofessional track	15	16	8	**15**
Would help GPA	12	13	20	**13**
Counts for more than one major/minor	15	11	11	**13**
Because of a particular instructor	10	11	12	**13**
Was a lab that accompanied a course	10	11	7	**10**
Peer recommended	7	7	9	**7**
Counted for another (non-A&S) requirement	8	7	4	**7**

Percentage response rates broken down by division of declared major.

	Percentage by student group			
Priority for Course Selection	Humanities	Natural Sciences	Social Sciences	Undeclared
Needed for intended major	52	53	47	38
Days or times fit schedule well	46	37	46	39
Fulfills an AXLE requirement	36	29	30	47
Curious about the topic	39	24	24	28
Fulfilled a prerequisite	17	21	21	25
Was a brand-new subject	19	20	20	21
To explore a possible major	15	11	11	18
Counted for a preprofessional track	12	17	16	14
Would help GPA	16	15	12	15
Counts for more than one major/minor	9	11	13	12
Because of a particular instructor	16	9	11	10
Was a lab that accompanied a course	9	13	9	10
Peer recommended	8	7	7	7
Counted for another (non-A&S) requirement	7	7	5	8

Back to top

III. AXLE Survey
Fall 2022

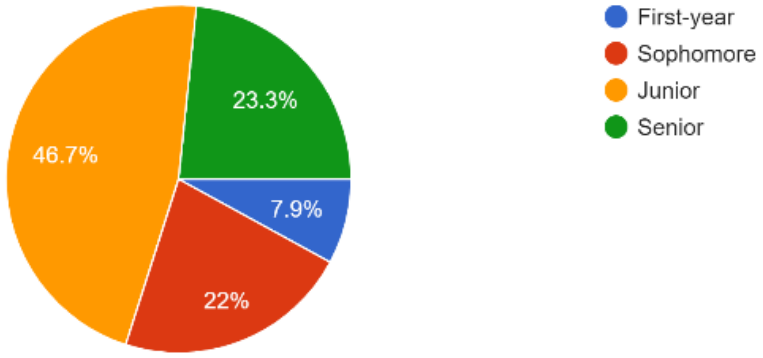
The committee launched a survey of undergraduates in Fall 2022 (N=251) to get a better sense of how they perceived and experienced AXLE requirements.

Respondent Profile

Academic School	Primary	Secondary
Blair	0	3
CAS	190	23
Peabody	22	10
SOE	11	10

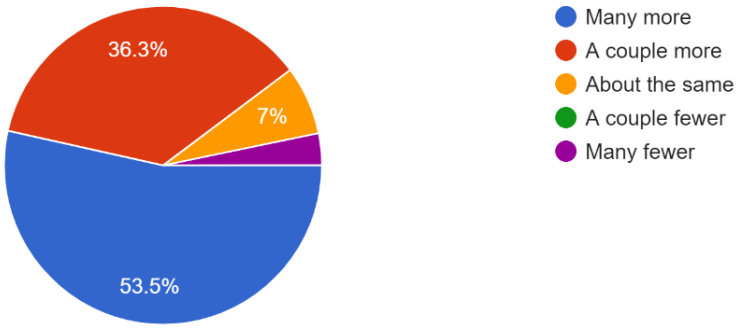
What class year are you?

227 responses



Do you have the sense that AXLE contains many more, a couple more, about the same, a couple fewer, or many fewer requirements than the other colleges (Blair, Peabody, School of Engineering)?

215 responses



Back to top

Responses to multiple selection on primary reasons students chose another Vanderbilt school over A&S:

- AXLE includes requirements they do not think they will need/use (n=146, 68%).
- AXLE is too hard to fulfill (n=128, 60%).
- CAS only confers a Bachelor of Arts and not a Bachelor of Science (n=32, 15%).

Qualitative responses regarding positive and negative aspects of AXLE:

- 150 (70%) indicated they liked the variety of course options to complete AXLE.
- 90 responses (40%) indicated the number of requirements was a deterrent to completing AXLE.
- 51 responses (22%) indicated that AXLE was too inflexible.
- 40 responses (17%) indicated that AXLE was inaccessible and difficult to understand.
- 32 responses (15%) indicated that AXLE was not engaging.

STUDENT QUOTES

- I think AXLE does it's [*sic*] best in trying to get students out of their comfort zone and try areas of study that build a more well-rounded [*sic*], however AXLE has a stigma that makes it more of a chore than exciting.
- The courses that count for INT do not really make sense - almost all international political science courses do not count as INT credit, despite the fact that they discuss culture and political aspects of the communities. It is also inconsistent with the ones that count - Latin American Politics is INT, while African politics is not. While there are classes like History of Climate Change and cinema classes that do count.
- AXLE designations on some classes seem random because multiple AXLE categories could apply to these classes. Having courses where you can choose which AXLE category you want to fulfill would be beneficial. I also think creating a core curriculum specific to each major instead for everyone in CAS would be better.
- My biggest issue with AXLE is it's [*sic*] inflexibility. I am a transfer student and have had issues with my classes transferring for AXLE, even though they were very similar classes to what was offered at Vanderbilt. Additionally, I am very interested in studying abroad next semester and graduating a semester early. My choice selection for study abroad has been greatly minimized due to the fact that one cannot satisfy AXLE abroad.
- I've noticed that a LOT of students switch from A&S or engineering to Peabody to avoid AXLE. They view it as messy and less straightforward than Peabody's version of AXLE. I feel that there is a lot of gatekeeping in AXLE. My biggest qualm is: If I'm an ECON & HOD major with a primary major in ECON, then I have to take 15 unique hours for the business minor, but if I'm an HOD& ECON major with a primary major in Peabody, then I can double count ECON for my business minor and take less business unique classes.

Back to top

IV. Pilot Course Survey
Spring 2023

On March 1, 2023, several members of the Future of the A&S Curriculum committee met with students in the Spring 2023 core pilot courses. The two sections met with the committee to share feedback about the course structure, teaching style, and assignments. Participants completed a survey to share additional feedback to assist the committee as it plans to expand the program for Fall 2023.

Summary

There were a total of 23 recorded responses to the survey. 12 respondents are currently enrolled in "Being Human," and 11 are in "Science, Technology, and Values." Of the 23 respondents, 7 were first-year students, 6 were sophomores, and 5 were juniors and seniors.

87% (20/23) indicated that a majority of first-year students would benefit from the course. 65% (15/23) indicated that their discussions from class carry over into non-classroom settings. 65% additionally indicated that they could imagine students discussing course content in outside settings.

Multiple senior students emphatically discussed how much they enjoyed their courses. One senior student stated, "In my four years, this is the first time that I felt fully immersed in an authentically intellectual environment. The discussion is meaningful, intersectional, and forces me to articulate my beliefs in a way I think first years would benefit from greatly….Ultimately, I could not be more confident this should become the new way of teaching at Vanderbilt." An undeclared sophomore shared that the course style, "allows us to form our own opinions by posing questions instead of directing our thoughts a certain way."

In the open feedback session, several first-year students articulated a greater connection to peers as a result of discussing the coursework and assignments. A first-year student commented that the course felt different than other first-year courses, and that the professor serves as "a moderator for the conversation rather than just lecturing for the entire class." A sophomore Physics major indicated that they consistently confronted texts outside their usual course of study and benefited significantly from the varied cross-section of student interests and majors.

Students commented on needing to design assignments and reading load with first-year student in mind—and that the coursework will need to align with first-year students' standard exam dates (General Chemistry, Calculus, etc.). Students called for more rewriting and revisiting of their assignments throughout the semester would be beneficial. Finally, some felt that to develop interdisciplinary thinking, students must understand what disciplines are and that the first-year courses could help introduce different kinds of disciplinary thinking.

Back to top

V. Program and Department Survey
Spring 2023

To gauge interest in and concerns regarding curricular proposals in development, the Future of the A&S Curriculum Committee distributed a survey to departmental and program faculty, both tenure-stream and continuing track, during meetings with all A&S units during the Spring 2023 semester.

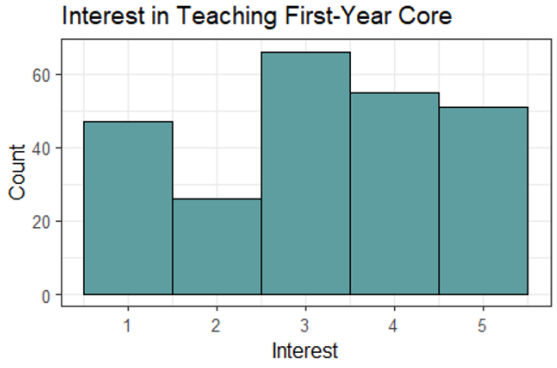
Faculty were asked to complete a paper or online survey during visits to the department by representatives of the committee. Email reminders were sent to encourage faculty who were absent from the departmental meetings or who did not complete the survey during the departmental meetings. As of April 9 2023, the survey had 256 responses from 33 departments. This comprises 40% of the 635 full-time faculty in Arts and Science.

The survey inquired about interest in teaching in the First-year Core or developing interdisciplinary courses for the Exploratory Core. It also asked about courses that faculty are currently teaching that might fit into the Core Capacities in the proposed new curriculum. There was space for free responses about general education, about concerns related to their departmental teaching and its role in the curriculum, and any other suggestions and questions.

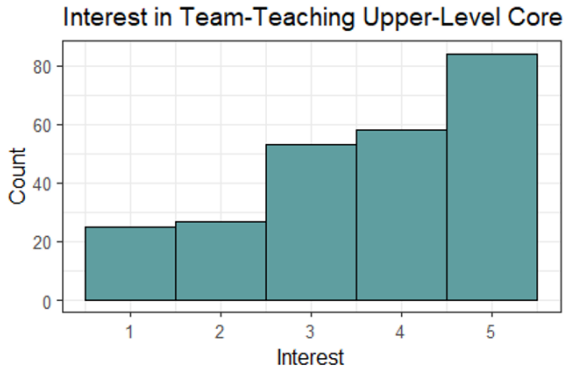
We had been concerned that if the response rate were low, the survey might not be representative and could be affected by selection bias if faculty with strong positive or negative opinions about the proposed curriculum were more likely to respond. However, with a response rate of 40%, we are reasonably confident in treating this survey as representative of faculty opinion about the proposed curriculum and the process under which it was developed.

Results:

- 106 faculty (41%) expressed interest (4 or 5 on a five-point scale) in teaching in the First-Year Core.
- 142 faculty (55%) expressed interest (4 or 5 on a five-point scale) in teaching an interdisciplinary or “integrative” team-taught Core course.



Back to top



Regarding currently taught courses that might satisfy the Core Capacities, every capacity was represented in all three divisions of the college, with the following breakdown:

Capacity	# courses
A: Written & Creative Expression	280
B: Systemic & Structural Thinking	270
C: Cultural & Interpretive Investigation	319
D: Data, Information & Computational Literacy	174
E: Ethical & Social Engagement	210

Breakdown of interest in teaching Core courses by department:

		First-Year Core			Exploratory Core		
Dept.	Responses	Mean	# 4,5	% 4,5	Mean	# 4,5	% 4,5
African American and Diaspora Studies	2	1.5	0	0%	4.5	2	100%
American Studies	3	4.7	3	100%	4.7	3	100%
Anthropology	7	3.6	4	57%	3.7	5	71%
Art	1	5.0	1	100%	5.0	1	100%
Asian Studies	13	3.5	6	46%	3.8	8	62%
Biochemistry & Chemical Biology	1	3.0	0	0%	3.0	0	0%
Biological Sciences	19	3.0	7	37%	3.5	9	47%
Business Studies	6	4.0	4	67%	3.5	4	67%
Chemistry	11	3.1	4	36%	2.9	4	36%
Cinema and Media Arts	2	2.0	0	0%	4.0	1	50%

Back to top

Classical Studies and Mediterranean Studies	5	4.2	4	80%	4.4	4	80%
Communication Studies	9	3.8	5	56%	4.0	7	78%
Communication of Science and Technology	6	3.8	4	67%	4.0	3	50%
Earth and Environmental Sciences	6	3.5	3	50%	4.2	4	67%
Economics	15	2.2	3	20%	2.9	5	33%
English	14	2.2	3	21%	3.1	6	43%
French and Italian	5	4.0	2	40%	4.2	3	60%
Gender and Sexuality Studies	5	3.8	2	40%	3.0	1	20%
German, Russian & East European Studies	1	5.0	1	100%	5.0	1	100%
History	22	3.0	7	32%	3.4	11	50%
History of Art	6	2.8	2	33%	3.8	5	83%
Jewish Studies	7	3.7	4	57%	4.3	6	86%
Mathematics	9	3.0	5	56%	4.0	7	78%
Medicine, Health & Society	9	3.4	4	44%	3.9	5	56%
Neuroscience	2	3.5	1	50%	3.5	1	50%
Philosophy	5	3.0	1	20%	3.4	2	40%
Physics and Astronomy	11	2.8	5	45%	4.1	8	73%
Political Science	21	2.9	6	29%	3.4	10	48%
Psychology	14	2.9	5	36%	3.1	5	36%
Religious Studies	4	3.5	2	50%	4.0	3	75%
Sociology	7	2.6	1	14%	3.6	3	43%
Spanish and Portuguese	3	4.7	3	100%	4.7	3	100%
Theatre	5	4.8	4	80%	3.8	2	40%
TOTAL	256	3.2	106	41%	3.6	142	55%

We made word clouds to give an overview of the free-response answers. For the general education question, the word cloud was dominated by words suggesting learning goals: “capacities,” “skills,” “courses,” “writing,” “language,” “world,” “critical,” “thinking,” etc. For the departmental and individual concerns, words were more suggestive of the challenge of teaching the curriculum: “students,” “faculty,” “courses,” “curriculum,” “teaching,” “classes,” “core,” “department,” etc.

Back to top

Members of the Departments, Majors, and Pathways Subcommittee analyzed the narrative reports from the Spring 2023 departmental and program visits and summarized the most salient and frequent feedback from faculty colleagues.

Responses to the First-Year Core focused on several issues:

- Implications for Vanderbilt Visions and the First-Year Writing Seminars
- Faculty effort: staffing, pedagogical training for instructors, incentives to participate
- Content: need to avoid a Western Civilization or Great Books approach and to include natural sciences and social sciences content
- Concerns about a shared syllabus and faculty autonomy over teaching

Responses to the Core Capacities focused on several areas:

Writing and Communication:

- The need for an explicit emphasis on writing and engaging with texts
- The need as well to emphasize other aspects (visual, spoken) of critical engagement and communication that are "not just writing"
- Need for pedagogical support and training for faculty in these areas

Languages:

- Desire to see world languages explicitly included
- Minimal support for less emphasis on world languages than AXLE currently requires

Laboratory Science:

- Concern that students need to be taught scientific methods and thinking but question as to whether a "lab" is the right emphasis
- Questions about whether we should think more broadly about laboratories beyond the natural sciences

Ethics:

- Clarifying whether such a capacity would be more normative/prescriptive or analytical and critical, such as understanding how individuals and groups adopt values and norms

Data Literacy:

- Clarifying whether the capacity is about technological, scientific, or digital literacy, and how focused or broad this category should be

Other:

- Questions about whether there should be explicit capacities or requirements addressing structural racism, financial literacy, visual and aesthetic appreciation, engagement with the local community, and social media

Back to top

More general concerns and questions focused on the following:

- Implications for academic advising and clarity of the curriculum for students
- Potential burdens for smaller departments and programs
- Concerns about focusing on what students want rather than what they need to be well-educated
- Concern about the possible conflict between the effort needed to adopt this new curriculum and the university's growing emphasis on research

Back to top

XIII. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The committee would like to express its gratitude to many individuals on the faculty, in the student body, on the staff, and in university administration, who sharpened our thinking about the curriculum, helped answer questions, or contributed their expertise to our committee.

Bart Quinet, Assistant Provost and University Registrar
Eric Cummings, Director, Office of Academic Program Review, Assessment, and Accreditation
Joe Bandy, Interim Director, Center for Teaching
Derek Bruff, Past Director, Center for Teaching
Lillian Haber, Interim Director, College of Arts and Science Pre-Major Academic Advising
John Shaw, University Librarian
Melissa Mallon, Associate University Librarian for Teaching and Learning
John Bradley, Director of the Writing Studio and Tutoring Services
Consuela Knox, Director of Academic Partnering, Office of Data and Strategic Analytics
Michael Bess, Chancellor's Professor of History
Christopher Loss, Associate Professor of Public Policy and Higher Education/History
Dana Nelson, Gertrude Conaway Vanderbilt Professor of English
Vanessa Beasley, former Vice Provost, Academic Affairs and Dean of Residential Faculty
Tiffiny Tung, Vice Provost of Undergraduate Education and Research
Alex Sevilla, Vice Provost of Career Engagement
Melissa Gresalfi, Dean of Residential Colleges
Roger Moore, Senior Associate Dean and Director of Undergraduate Education
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Mandy Lalrindiki, Assistant Director of Innovation and Design Research, Wond'ry Center
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Philippe Fauchet, Dean of the School of Engineering
Cynthia Paschal, Undergraduate Associate Dean, School of Engineering
Melissa Rose, Undergraduate Associate Dean, Blair School of Music
Anita Wager, Undergraduate Associate Dean, Peabody College
Vanderbilt Student Government Academic Affairs Committee
College of Arts and Science Undergraduate Advisory Board
Students in the Spring 2023 pilot core courses
Ad hoc Student Advisory Group (with special thanks to the core group, noted by asterisks):

Cassandra Atzrodt	Jennifer Coen	Amaris Joubert	*Omotayo Fasan	*Virali Patel	Maia Reynolds
Tariq Bolden	Olivia Core	Connie Kang	*Rohit Kataria	Anseley Philippe	Alex Ruemmier
Macy Browning	*Ilana Drake	AJ Kolondra	*Saksham Saksena	Kayla Prowell	*Kyle Vallone
Hannah Bruns	Ishaan Gadiyar	*Abhinav Krishnan	*Zakaria Maaieh	*Chandler Quaile	Angela Yan
	Tanya Iyer	*Geena Han	Victoria McMillen		

Back to top

XIV. OPEN COMMENT PERIOD

During the open comment period (April 11-23, 2023), the committee received feedback and questions from faculty of all ranks and from many A&S units. We reviewed every submission that came in via the online comment form and responded to all non-anonymous comments. We received independent email queries as well, a total of roughly 40 comments in all, some touching on multiple topics. The topics and number of submissions via the comment form and posed at Q&A meetings are outlined below, organized from most to least frequently voiced:

- **Core courses** – inquiries about First-Year Core and writing standards, staffing for these courses, whether a one-semester Core in the first year would be preferable, why faculty should teach out of their main areas of expertise, whether and when syllabi would be available, and how texts and assignments would be determined; concerns about loss of FYWS courses (11).
- **Capacities** – queries about how tagging would work, how many classes would or could be tagged in particular departments, what the implications of tagging only some classes would be, whether students would be discouraged from taking non-tagged courses, whether classes outside A&S could be tagged with capacities, and if there would be an expedited curriculum committee approval process (7).
- **World Language requirement** – clarifications about the requirement and inquiries about future test-out policies across the four schools and colleges (6).
- **Lab requirement** – potential revision and future goals (5).
    - The wide difference of opinion on this question led us to set up a survey of natural sciences faculty (see below).
- **Academic policies** – questions about recommendations outlined in the Academic Policy Subcommittee Report re: AP/IB credit and proposed CR/NC policy, as well as other questions about whether an A&S minimum hours requirement remains necessary (4).
- **Data Analysis & Information Literacy capacity** – suggestion to change the title to make the category less specific and more friendly to computational fields (3).
- **Complexity** – criticism of new requirement as potentially confusing to students, suggestions for redesign of how requirements are explained (3).
- **Training and advising** – inquiries about advising practices and Director of Undergraduate Studies support under the new curriculum (2).
- **'Big Question' courses** – question about how to facilitate team-teaching and finding other faculty with whom to collaborate in designing "Big Question" courses; suggestion that those courses should be able to count for the major (2).
- **Timing** – suggestion to delay the faculty vote to Fall 2023 (2).
- **Divisional requirements** – inquiry as to whether the proposal encourages enough exposure to different disciplines (1).
- **Course load** – question about whether new requirements would truly be less burdensome in terms of credit hours (1).

Back to top

Comments and questions received during the open comment period yielded a number of revisions to the proposal and to the report, outlined below:

I. Changes to the PROPOSAL

- **Implementation Timeline**
  In the event of a positive vote on the proposal, departments, and programs will need time, conversation, and support from the Dean's Office to work through staffing adjustments, capacity tagging, and potential course development. The steering committee will take stock and consult with the full faculty in December 2023 to determine whether a Fall 2024 rollout is feasible for all academic units or if additional time for implementation is preferable.

- **First-Year Writing Seminars**
  The committee endorses offering a small set of first-year writing seminars (tagged with an "A") alongside the First-Year Core. These seminars would be in addition to, not a replacement for, the First-Year Core.

- **Lab Requirement**
  The committee conducted a survey of natural science faculty to respond to several calls to rescind the lab requirement until those courses could be reworked and improved, especially for non-STEM majors. The results supported keeping the lab requirement as it currently stands but with a deadline for revision. For further information, see the Lab Requirement Survey below. The Lab Study Group section of this report has been updated with an implementation timeline; see Section IX, Lab Study Group.

- **Capacities**
  Capacity D has been retitled "Data, Information & Computational Literacy." Faculty comments indicated that the previous title, "Data Analysis and Information Literacy," limited the scope of the category too much. Note that only the title, not the learning outcomes, has shifted for this capacity.

II. Changes to the REPORT

Bachelor of Science degree: implementation timeline added to the recommendation (section IX, Bachelor of Science)**.**

Lab Study Group: implementation timeline added to the recommendation (section IX, Lab Study Group).

Back to top

Academic Policy: implementation timeline added to the recommendation; consideration of whether a minimum hours policy in A&S is necessary added to the docket of potential policy changes (section IX, Additional Committee Recommendations).

Exploratory Core: preferred A&S registration policy added to the guidelines (section IV, subsection Exploratory Core).

World Language Proposal: paragraph added outlining transfer student policy (section X, subsection World Languages Proposal).

Academic Policies: point 5 in the Pass/Fail proposal revised, raising the number of allowable CR/NC hours from 18 to 24 (section IX, Other Recommendations).

Back to top

Lab Requirement Survey

During the Open Comment Period (April 11-23), some natural sciences faculty questioned the necessity of a laboratory requirement in the proposal. As noted in Section IX, the committee had already planned to constitute a lab study group in Fall 2023 to make recommendations for amending the current lab requirement.

Some suggested that retaining a lab requirement, identical to that in AXLE, was counter-productive to designing a more meaningful lab experience for both STEM and non-STEM students. Other faculty strongly opposed removing the lab requirement. The committee decided to survey natural sciences faculty directly to solicit additional feedback. Faculty were asked for their level of agreement (1=strongly disagree; 5=strongly agree) with the following statements:

1. I believe the proposed curriculum should require a lab, identical to that required in AXLE (one natural sciences course and a one-hour lab) until a formal working group can propose redesigned lab requirements.
2. I believe the proposed curriculum should **not** include a lab requirement *until* a formal working group can propose a redesigned lab requirement.

The results are outlined in the table below:

Department	Responses	Should Include (AVG)	Not Include (AVG)
Total	66	3.68	2.36
Biological Sciences	14	3.21	2.86
Chemistry	12	3.75	2.17
EES	6	4.33	1.5
Mathematics	1	5	1
Neuroscience	2	3.5	3.5
Physics & Astronomy	13	4.15	1.92
Psychology	18	3.39	2.67

Rank	Responses	Should Include (AVG)	Not Include (AVG)
Total	66	3.68	2.36
Continuing Track	21	3.9	2.38
Tenure-Track/Tenured	45	3.58	2.36

The total responses account for 30% of the natural sciences faculty. More faculty, both continuing-track and tenure-track/tenured faculty, supported keeping a lab requirement in the proposal than removing it. Moreover, the most frequent response for including the lab was “Strongly Agree” and the most frequent response for removing the lab was “Strongly Disagree.”

Back to top

Below are a few representative comments from faculty:

- “Based on what we see in the natural sciences just because a student is coming into college with a science course from high school does not mean that they have taken an in-person, hands-on lab, particularly for those students in the COVID impacted generations. Scientific literacy is critical, and part of being scientifically literate is learning how to discover in an experimentally-based setting.”
- “I believe that a lab for all students is desirable, but I would like to see this requirement considerably reworked. Current labs for non-science majors (which essentially haven't changed in 45 years) could probably be improved in some way.”
- “I think every student should have lab - I just think we should broaden what departments offer labs them (psych, anthropology, etc)…my personal opinion is that every student benefits in their personal life from directly manipulating and engaging with the scientific method. Developing hypotheses and predicting cause and effect are transcendent skills for everyday living.”

The survey comments align with sentiments submitted in the open comment period: that there is an important value to a hands-on experience or lab in the natural sciences within undergraduate general education, but that our current requirement needs substantial rethinking to make it meaningful for students in both STEM and non-STEM fields. **The survey further supports the recommendation to form a Lab Study Group this summer to begin work in Fall 2023.**

Back to top