

**Catamount Core Curriculum Committee (CCCC) Final Report to the UVM Faculty Senate
May 3, 2022**

This report summarizes the work of the Catamount Core Curriculum Committee (CCCC), an ad-hoc joint committee the Faculty Senate and Provost’s Office during the 2021-2022 year

1. A brief history of the CCCC

This was the inaugural year of the Catamount Core Curriculum Committee, created as an ad-hoc joint committee of the Office of the Provost and the Faculty Senate. Its charge has been to create a structure and process to develop and implement the 40-credit general education curriculum whose framework was adopted by Faculty Senate in Fall 2021. There are a number of factors that have led to the development of a general education curriculum on campus – advocacy by both faculty and administrators over many years, the adoption of gen ed curricula by peer institutions, and a clear message from our external accreditors that the fragmented version of general education that currently exists at UVM (a combination of 15 credits of campus-wide gen ed supplemented by another 30+ credits of distribution requirements at the college level) was not sufficient to ensure a coherent experience for undergraduates. Accordingly, in 2019, the Provost’s Office initiated a program aimed at developing, implementing and coordinating a campus-wide general education curriculum, one that would consist of 40 unique credits spread across multiple categories.

This process included a call for proposals for new designations (to join with and strengthen the existing 15 credits across five categories), the selection of preliminary areas by the Provost’s Office, the creation of faculty work-groups that spent several months revising and refining the original proposals and developing expected competencies and assessments, and the development of an overarching framework that was evaluated and ultimately passed by the UVM Faculty Senate in Fall 2021 with the expected launch date of Fall 2023 for the complete new general education Catamount Core Curriculum. This new curriculum is comprised of 42 credits across three main areas in Liberal Arts (21 credits), Core Skills (9 credits) and Common Ground Values (12 credits). A brief timeline of existing and new categories can be seen below:

Table 1 Existing General Education Requirements at UVM (Pre-CCCC)

<i>Designation</i>	<i>Category</i>	<i>Adoption</i>	<i>Original Administering Body</i>
D1	Race and Racism in the US	2006	Diversity Curriculum Review Committee (DCRC)
D2	Diversity of Human Experience	2006	Diversity Curriculum Review Committee (DCRC)
FWIL	Foundational Writing and Information Literacy	2010	FWIL Director
SU	Sustainability	2012	Sustainability Curriculum Review Committee (SCRC)
QR	Quantitative Reasoning	2018	Quantitative Curriculum Review Committee (QCRC)

Table 2 Catamount Core Curriculum (Active as of Fall 2023)

Area	Designation	Category	Possible Credits
Liberal Arts	AH1, AH2	Arts and Humanities	6
Liberal Arts	S1	Social Sciences	6
Liberal Arts	N1, N2	Natural Sciences	6
Liberal Arts	MA	Mathematics	3
Core Skills	QD	Quantitative and Data Literacy	3
Core Skills	WIL1	Foundational Writing and Info Literacy	3
Core Skills	WIL2/OC	Foundational Writing and Info Literacy 2 or Oral Communication	3
Common Ground Values	D1	Race and Racism in the US	3-6
Common Ground Values	D2	Diversity of Human Experience	3
Common Ground Values	SU	Sustainability	3
Common Ground Values	GC1, GC2	Global Citizenship	3

Because our general education curriculum is meant to be distributed, students are provided with the option of choosing between categories and courses; thus students have options within Liberal Arts categories that include multiple courses across 27 credits but are only *required* to take 21 credits worth of classes.

Roster of Courses

In order to launch the Catamount Core Curriculum, we needed to have sufficient courses to actually do so. We did not wish to recreate some of the mis-steps of previous campus-wide initiatives; namely, when the D1/D2 designations were launched, the original set of courses used to fulfill the requirements were simply selected from the existing catalog – thus the vast majority of these courses were not designed to meet the expectations or competencies of the general education categories but were rather selected on the basis of *possible* alignment. In later years faculty began to design courses with D1/D2 expectations in mind but in the meantime, this led to a great deal of confusion amongst faculty and students alike as courses were often designed with disciplinary or major objectives rather than general education ones. A similar dynamic played out with the SU designation, though this was lessened and mitigated to some extent by the creation of a Sustainability Fellows professional development program in which some support was provided to create courses in alignment with the designation. Additionally, while the D1/D2/SU/QC/FWIL were always meant to include regular assessment and evaluation, in practice these did not occur, leading to often significant drift in course content and objectives.

Before embarking on the development of the Catamount Core Curriculum, therefore, the existing designations were thoroughly reviewed between 2019-2021. While the QC courses were relatively new and *had* been designed with new standards in mind and FWIL were more regularly reviewed, the D1/D2/SU had never been examined. Both the SCRC and DCRC thus embarked upon a rigorous review process, removing many existing courses that were approved for the designation but were no longer taught due to retirements, faculty departures, change in expertise, or other factors. In the case of D1/D2, for example, this reduced the roster of ‘active’ courses from 660 to 182. These remaining courses were reviewed using the current expectations and objectives (which have themselves changed significantly over more than a decade). Thus, what the existing general education courses were able to hand over to the incoming curriculum committee was an updated and current roster of courses.

Governance

One of the first tasks for the incoming Catamount Core Curriculum Committee was thus to take on two simultaneous (and significant) mandates:

- 1) to oversee the operations of several existing curricula, ones that had previously been administered by campus-wide committees or other bodies (this includes approving new submissions, reviewing transfer requests, and dealing with other administrative matters)
- 2) to develop processes and procedures for creating and refining the new general education curriculum, its governance, day-to-day operations, and building a roster of courses such that students will actually be able to fulfill their requirements in a timely fashion

The body charged with this initial task is – for its first two years – an ad-hoc group, half elected by the Faculty Senate (with representation from every college) and half appointed by the Provost’s Office. This represents the inconsistent structures that oversaw the existing gen ed requirements and recognizes that it is not practical or sustainable to administer each of these individual requirements with a full complement of elected members from each college (as was the case with the DCRC and SCRC previously).

One of the significant advantages that we had in the CCCC during the past year, however, was continuity with earlier gen ed efforts. Our numbers included five former members of the DCRC (two chairs, including the immediate past chair), three former members of the SCRC including one of the founding chairs, multiple faculty across all ranks, many with experience teaching existing general education courses, or working to advance them through university systems (with several current and former chairs, deans and program directors also serving on the committee). The following is our membership this year:

Table 3: CCCC Membership 2021-2022

Cathy Paris, CALS Elected Libby Miles, CAS Elected Priyantha Wijesinghe, CEMS Elected Shana Haines, CESS Elected Jeremy Sibold, CNHS Elected Suzanne Lowensohn, GSB Elected Emily Manetta, HCOL Elected Daisy Benson, Libraries Elected Cecilia Danks, RSENR Elected Ginny DeFrances, SGA Elected <i>Ex- Officio</i> Pablo Bose, CAS, Provost’s Office (Chair) Jennifer Dickinson, Provost’s Office Anil Lalwani, Fellow for Assessment Susan Munkres, Community and Experiential Learning Office Lynn White Cloud, Dean’s Offices Advisors	Kat Scollins, CAS (AH1) Dave Massell, CAS (AH2) Joan Rosebush, CEMS (MA) Terrance Delaney, CALS (N1, N2) Jenn Strickler, CAS (S1) Clare Ginger, RSENR (D2) Joanne Pencak, GSB (D1) Alex Zakaras, CAS (GC1, GC2, Fall 2021) Helen Morgan Parmett, CAS (OC) Susanmarie Harrington, CAS (WIL1/WIL2) Tao Sun, CALS (GC, Spring 2022) Thomas Desisto, CALS (QD, Fall 2021) Laura Hill, CALS (SU) John Sama, Provost’s Office (staff) Tiera Porter, Faculty Senate Office (staff)
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Monthly meetings were held to fulfill our functions; due to the pandemic, all meetings were held virtually via Teams. Most of the CCCC’s meeting time was divided between our simultaneous tasks – reviewing submissions for new courses in the active designations (D1, D2, SU, QR, FWIL), soliciting proposals for courses to meet the new designations beginning in Fall 2023, communicating with affected units all across campus, and creating a structure and process for the work of this body as it transitions from an ad-hoc to a more regular form.

Process

Given a need to be both comprehensive and efficient, we adopted a sub-committee composition and asked teams of three members to review and evaluate each submission and transfer request we received. We developed a rubric appropriate to each designation area and applied these to our reviews. We ask that the CCCC receive submissions at least 3 weeks prior to our meetings and the approval process follows this general pattern:

- Step 1: Instructor uploads current (or proposed) syllabus and supplemental action form to Course Leaf
- Step 2: Course is approved department chair/program director
- Step 3: Course is approved by college curriculum committee
- Step 4: Course is approved by CCCC
- Step 5: Course is approved by Provost’s Office

When courses are ‘rolled-back’ for revision to faculty, if these are minor revisions any changes can be communicated directly to the CCCC chair/staff who will then adjust and send on the

submission through the Course Leaf system. If more substantive changes are requested, the course will be paused and revisions will be reviewed by the entire subcommittee.

An archive of course syllabi and proposals (supplemental forms) has been created by CCCC staff (our administrator John Sama). All courses currently being prepared for the launch of the Catamount Core Curriculum are valid as of 2023-2028. Having the archive should make reviews of this curriculum straightforward in the future (and if a change of instructors and instruction occurs in between this time) as we will be able to provide these materials to new instructors if necessary and when a five-year review is upon us, instructors may review their previous syllabi and supplemental forms to inform us of what, if anything, has been changed in the course.

New Course Submissions 2021-2022

As the new Catamount Core Curriculum is not active until Fall 2023, this was an ideal year to ‘test out’ the general education framework and to see what changes might be imagined. The faculty groups that created the new categories in particular were tasked with bringing together sometimes disparate (and indeed often competing) ideas about particular designations. Thus, there are several tweaks that need to be considered (see section on recommendations).

Additionally, we have requested that the Office of Institutional Research (OIR) present us with an analysis of what kind of capacity across the CCCC (in terms of seats necessary per student over a four-year period to meet requirements, disaggregated by college and designation) is needed. We hope to have this review ready for Fall 2022.

Table 4: Course Proposals (by Category)

		Received	Approved	Rolled Back	Pending
Arts & Humanities	AH1	11	11		
Arts & Humanities	AH2	4	4		
Diversity	D1	9	7	2	
Diversity	D2	14	11	3	
Global Citizenship	GC1	7	3	4	
Global Citizenship	GC2	26	5		21
Math-QD	MA	16	16		
Math-QD	QD	8	8		
Natural Science	N1	3	3		
Natural Science	N2	0			
Social Science	S1	15	14	1	
Sustainability	SU	10	7	3	
WIL-OC	WIL1	0			
WIL-OC	WIL2	9	4	2	3
WIL-OC	OC	10	2	0	8
Remove Designation/WD	QR	2			
		144	95	15	32

Table 5: Course Proposals (by College/School)

	Received	Approved	Rolled Back	Pending
CALS	6	2	4	
CAS	83	49	2	32
CEMS	25	22	3	
CESS	7	5	2	
CNHS	6	2	4	
GRAD	0			
GSB	0			
HCOL	12	11	1	
RSENR	5	5		
	144	96	16	32

Table 6: Transfer Requests

	Received	Approved	Denied	Pending
D1	14	6	7	1
D2	9	7	2	0
SU	3	1	2	0
FWIL	16	11	5	0
	42	25	16	1

The majority of minor changes requested by the committee for course proposals was to include the language regarding general education competencies within course syllabi.

Assessment Plan

As noted previously, the existing general education requirements at UVM have not historically had a robust (or any) assessment mechanism. The investment of the Provost's Office in assessment activities and especially the availability of a postdoctoral fellow to develop such a structure has been an invaluable part of our work, especially in his design of short- and long-term measures of success for courses in each category. We have had an opportunity to look at some draft questionnaires and survey instruments to help us assess course effectiveness and look forward to integrating these into the evolving structure of the Catamount Core Curriculum.

Challenges

Some of the main issues that arose this year – aside from the general disruption of pandemic teaching and other on- and off-campus disruptions – had to do with multiple factors. Trying to align a new set of campus-wide requirements within already heavily-constrained professional and pre-professional programs which are beholden not only to disciplines but often to external accreditation has been an ongoing issue. Similarly, even for those colleges with relatively broad distribution requirements, aligning these with the new general education requirements has sometimes meant multiple conversations and attempts.

Our approach in the CCCC has been to look for spaces of compromise and common-sense adjustments, so that neither the existing curriculum nor the general education framework must contort themselves to fit one another. The spirit of providing a broadly comprehensive and expansive liberal arts foundation, supplemented with core skills and grounded in commonly-held values is what animates the Catamount Core Curriculum and so much of the curriculum we already have.

That said, there are several substantive, process-oriented and structural suggestions we have and would like to incorporate into an omnibus set of recommendations to Faculty Senate for Fall 2022. Our recommendations fall into three categories: 1) how to tweak the general education framework, 2) how to structure the eventual Senate Committee, and 3) how to improve the mechanisms for implementing and delivering the Catamount Core Curriculum.

1. Tweaking the framework:

- a. Allow 1-credit sequences (stacked into a 3-credit progression) in the case of performance and music courses. These are already taken in a collective manner and should be recognized for the AH1 category.
- b. Create an additional AH3 category for Literature to recognize the distinction within CAS between literature and humanities and to more easily map onto the CAS general distribution requirements.
- c. Adjust the language of OC to indicate that ‘presentation’ of oral skills does not mean formal presentations but rather observable oral communication skills (as evident, for example, in a language instruction class).
- d. S1 to include fourth category of competencies recognizing the value of applied social science courses, with associated expectations
- e. While there has historically been some ambiguity regarding experiential education, alternative options and utilizing entire programs to fulfill general education requirements, we would like to affirm that the CCC can only be completed through approved course-based pathways.

2. Structuring the Senate Committee:

- a. Senate will need to consider how to select members of the eventual committee. Currently we have elected members from each college, selected members (based on area specialization), and ex-officio members. In the eventual committee we would recommend election based on expertise, with proportional representation from every college incorporated into the formula.
- b. Terms should be at least 3 years long.

3. Improving mechanisms:

- a. HCOL courses are currently reviewed on an annual basis which is inefficient for both the college and the CCC committee. The advent of a new numbering system should assist with this process (with courses provided with unique numbers). If courses are taught by different instructors (as is often the case with HCOL), we will develop an expedited review process.
- b. Courses submitted after the February 15 catalogue deadline can still be approved for the CCC and we will develop a process with the Registrar's Office to incorporate these into the system.

Workplan 2022-2023

We plan to gather in August for a compensated half-day retreat with available committee members to finalize our recommendations to Faculty Senate and to review any outstanding courses that have come into our committee over Summer 2022. We will also plan to provide some training on processes and procedures for new members and have an opportunity for debriefing with returning members. Our main priorities for the year are as follows:

1. Submit a set of procedural and substantive changes to the Catamount Core Curriculum framework in September 2022 to Faculty Senate, receive feedback and submit a final version to the full Senate for a vote in November 2022
2. Submit a recommendation for the formation of the CCCC to the Faculty Senate as per their deadlines for its formation for Fall 2023
3. Assess the needed capacity for seats to fulfill the CCC demands
4. Review and approve as many courses as we can prior to the February 15 deadline
5. Improve policies and procedures as much as possible, with a particular focus on our assessment forms, our submission supplements, syllabi expectations, the website, and the transfer forms in each category

Report submitted by Pablo Bose, CCCC Chair, on behalf of 2021-2022 Committee members.