



TO: University of Wisconsin-Platteville Community

FROM: Dennis J. Shields, Chancellor 
Mittie Nimocks Den Herder, Provost and Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs

RE: Decision on changes in Core Curriculum and the Bachelor of Arts/Bachelor of Science distinction

DATE: 31 March 2016

Since summer of 2015 we have been involved in a robust and passionate discussion regarding changes to our Core Curriculum and distinctions between a UW-Platteville Bachelor of Science and a Bachelor of Arts degree. Your thoughtful and civil participation in this crucial conversation is greatly appreciated and the Chancellor's decision reflects strong consideration of your input.

We quote here from a document created by Director of General Education Shane Drefcinski stating the principles upon which a strong general education program is founded:

Principles:

Baccalaureate degrees should equip students with competencies in written and verbal communication, humanities and fine arts, mathematical reasoning, social sciences, natural sciences, as well as an understanding of a defined area of knowledge and the ability to learn on one's own.

All baccalaureate degrees should require the equivalent of at least four years of full-time study (120 semester credits) built around a defined body of knowledge.

General Education:

General education is an integral part of all baccalaureate degree programs in order to develop characteristics that help define an educated person. Liberal arts and sciences are fundamental components of collegiate degrees. Granting a degree implies that the student has achieved general education outcomes in addition to preparation in a major field of study.

A rigorous University of Wisconsin-Platteville education in the arts and sciences enables students to:

- 1. Apply their knowledge to recognize and solve a wide variety of problems,*
- 2. Appreciate and create works of excellence*
- 3. Develop an informed perspective on national and international issues, and*
- 4. Participate ethically and wisely in a diverse society.*

These categories of student learning outcomes reflect the LEAP (Liberal Education – America’s Promise essential learning outcomes developed by AAC&U (American Association of Colleges and Universities). We understand that what makes the University of Wisconsin-Platteville a university is that we ensure that students are not only well-prepared for their chosen careers but are well-prepared to live full, rich lives through which they contribute positively to making the world a better place.

The Core Curriculum presented here is almost identical to the revised proposal put forth by the General Education Task Force, and passed by the University Undergraduate Curriculum Commission (March 16, 2016). An amended version was passed by the Faculty Senate (March 29, 2016). The differences between the Chancellor’s decision and that of these governance bodies are the Chancellor’s decision to require a one-credit first-year experience course for all students entering with fewer than thirty credits and a reduction of the foreign language requirement to a first semester language requirement (satisfied by one year with “C” or better in high school). Please note that a second semester of Foreign Language will be required of those students wishing to earn the Bachelor of Arts degree.

In addition, the Chancellor’s decision is to implement the following Core Curriculum retroactively to fall 2014. This decision is due to many reasons including simplicity in terms of advising and catalogs, assisting our students to graduate in a timely fashion, and the effect of budget cuts on the number of seats in the general education courses. The most compelling argument however, is that these changes are what we expect our students to accomplish, and we should not wait to implement.

Common Core Curriculum:

Competencies

First Year Experience (1 credit)

English Composition (3-6 credits)

Students may attempt to test out of English 1130.

Mathematics (3 credits at or above Mathematics 1630)

Speech Communication (2 credits)

Physical Activity (1 credit) and Wellness (1 credit)

Veterans who provide their military education transcripts are awarded credit based on ACE recommendations.

Foreign Language (0-4 credits) – first semester competency

Students with one year of the same high school foreign language in which the student obtained a grade of “C” or better in the second semester may waive this course. In addition, students for whom English is already a second language may waive this course.

Liberal Arts and Sciences

Fine Arts (3 credits)

Historical Perspective (3 credits)

Humanities (3 credits)

Natural Sciences including a laboratory experience (4 credits)

Social Sciences (6 credits)

Ethnic Studies/Gender Studies/International Education (3 credits in each area)

Students may be able to double-count these courses with other general education requirements.

With this model most students will take approximately 40 credits of core curriculum coursework or 1/3 of the 120 credits required for graduation and providing a strong foundation that will be reinforced within their major coursework. Additional advantages are that this model will allow greater flexibility for students who change majors allowing for a shorter time to degree and less student debt. It will also allow many students greater opportunity for choosing electives in areas of interest. Most importantly this array of courses with additional B.A. or B.S. requirements allows students to attain the essential student learning outcomes outlined on page 1 of this document.

In addition, the Faculty Senate voted to endorse the following distinction between the Bachelor of Arts and Bachelor of Science degrees.

To satisfy the requirements of the Bachelor of Science degree, students will be required to take seven additional credits in Mathematics, Social Sciences, or Natural Science of which at least four credits must be in the Natural Sciences with a laboratory experience. The Natural Science course must be in a different discipline from that used to satisfy the Core Curriculum Requirement.

To satisfy the requirements for a Bachelor of Arts degree, six additional credits must be in courses at the 2000 level or above, in two of the following areas: Fine Arts, Historical Perspective, or Humanities.

The Chancellor agrees with this distinction and adds that the Bachelor of Arts distinction will require a second semester level of foreign language (or a second year of the same high school foreign language in which the student obtained a grade of "C" or better).

We expect that the faculty will continue to assess our general education program to ensure that students are achieving the expected learning outcomes and will make changes informed by that assessment.

Once more, we thank you for your participation in this crucial discussion.