

Executive Summary

Curriculum Review Steering Committee (CRSC) November 2012

This Executive Summary marks a turning point in the work of the Curriculum Review Steering Committee. Previously we have reported to the faculty in two written documents, the Year-end Report (May 2012) and an Update (September 2012), and in a PowerPoint presentation providing a preliminary resource analysis (November 2012).

Here we look back to the origin of the current curriculum review, summarize the committee's work and recommendations, and propose to the faculty a new College Curriculum.

On February 5, 2013, the faculty will be asked to endorse the guiding principles and conceptual framework of the College Curriculum. Pending the endorsement, the faculty as a whole will deliberate on the details and take ownership of this initiative.

1. Context

The current curriculum review grows out of a broad faculty discussion about the Liberal Arts at William & Mary. Products of this discussion include the 2010 *Conversations about the Liberal Arts*, the Provost's subsequent *White Paper*, and the *Challenge 1 Executive Summary on William & Mary as a Leading Liberal Arts University*.

Our work as a steering committee reflects and seeks to realize goals articulated in these documents, particularly the Challenge 1 summary: to promote intellectual rigor and open inquiry; to expand interdisciplinary study and global relevance; and to promote undergraduate research opportunities.

The proposed curriculum design is the product of extensive discussion among the committee members and incorporates the ideas of faculty members and students who participated in the CRSC survey, focus groups, departmental/program meetings, the presentation of a preliminary resource analysis, and all-faculty discussions in 2011 and 2012.

The Challenge 1 subcommittee called for more support for teaching, research, scholarship and creative activities. We recognize that these priorities are in accord with the College Curriculum.

2. Rationale for Changing the General Education Requirements (GER) System

We applaud the previous curriculum review of the College's general education system in 1993. Our students have benefited and will continue to benefit from the courses generated by that redesign.

In our research findings (Year-end Report, App. E, F) there was wide support among faculty and students for one component of the GER system, the Freshman Seminars. We also found a broad consensus, however, that the GER curriculum, as a whole, has run its course. There was general criticism that the system lacks integration, internal coherence, and dynamism. Students take their GER courses with little sense of any broader Liberal Arts rationale underpinning their choices. Students take only a portion of their GER courses at William & Mary, which dilutes the uniqueness of their William & Mary education. In addition, the structure of the GER curriculum divests the faculty of valuable input into the general education students receive outside of their majors. Finally, the GER courses have become enmeshed in departmental cultures to the point that it is difficult for us, as a faculty, to acknowledge our place in the commons or to work across disciplines with each other.

3. Guiding Principles Embodied in the College Curriculum

In our conversations with the faculty and our deliberations as a committee, principles emerged that guided our work. We believe that a W&M Liberal Arts education should:

- Be taught by William & Mary faculty.
- Provide students with an integrated intellectual experience across the four undergraduate years, making meaningful and coherent interconnections across disciplines.
- Inculcate in students the skills and habits of critical thinking: written, oral, and visual expression; research methods; collaboration; problem-solving; and intellectual agency.
- Explore the methodologies and epistemologies of the various academic disciplines, along with how they differ from and form synergies with one another.

- Be structured in such a way that faculty routinely bring their best scholarly and creative work to *all* undergraduate students.
- Encourage faculty to focus their attention not only on their respective major fields but also on the ways in which their fields contribute to the broader Liberal Arts.
- Enlarge our students' global perspective through an experience beyond the traditional classroom.
- Foster a sense of academic community among students and faculty.

These guiding principles are embodied in the College Curriculum.

4. Framework of the College Curriculum

The Liberal Arts experience must be sustained in a dynamic way, which will require strong faculty commitment to the intellectual and pedagogical rationale behind the design and to the short- and long-term operation of the system itself. The College Curriculum asks the Faculty of Arts & Sciences for a renewed commitment to the Liberal Arts, and asks us to recognize our participation and role in the commons. Embracing a more dynamic general education culture will help to ensure that the Liberal Arts persist as the foundation of a William & Mary undergraduate education.

The proposed College Curriculum will replace the current GER system. The framework of the College Curriculum consists of the COLL and departmental domain courses described below.

Descriptions of the Knowledge Domains

The faculty are familiar with the grouping of academic disciplines into three broad areas, known within Arts & Sciences as Areas I, II, and III and based on our administrative structure of departments and programs.

In the College Curriculum we also organize knowledge into three domains. Courses are designated by content or methodology rather than by their home in a given department or program. We believe it is likely that a given department or program will offer courses in more than one domain, and possible that a given course could be designated as belonging to more than one domain.

The committee recommends that the domains comprise coherent and commensurate divisions of the undergraduate course offerings, and be defined in such a way that every discipline on campus has a place in one or more of the domains. The titles and

descriptions we offer below represent the committee’s recommendations for how this could be done. During our Fall 2012 meetings with departments and programs, faculty members outside the committee expressed concerns and offered ideas for the domain names and their descriptions. We present here our language from the September 2012 Update, along with relevant discussion items, and we invite the faculty to continue the discussion.

Arts and Aesthetic Interpretation (AAI). Courses in this domain study the realm of human expression through language, literature, art, music, and performance. Students engage the world in ways ranging from the making of their own innovations and performances to the interpretation of cultural products to the study of the social and cognitive processes involved in their creation and reception. Students are encouraged to see the act of making, whether their own or that of others, as a way of investigating the world.

Discussion: The domain name and description were viewed as being overly narrow, thus appearing to exclude courses in departments such as Philosophy.

Idea for revision of name: *Arts, Letters, and Ideas*

Idea for revision of description: Add the sentence: *Since theories themselves, as opposed to the objects of those theories, are products of human activity, this domain also includes courses that focus on the nature of theorizing itself.*

Social and Humanistic Understanding (SHU). Courses in this domain study the realm of human cultures, societies, and individuals through their development, organization, and interaction. Some reach their conclusions on the basis of statistical modeling and scientific experimentation, others on the basis of observation, inference, and extrapolation. Students learn to describe, theorize, and explain human cultures, societies, and individuals in their variety over time and space.

Discussion: The name of this domain was confusing to those who construed “humanistic” to mean that all the humanities were lodged here. Others were concerned that some areas of the social sciences, such as political philosophy, were excluded.

Idea for revision of name: *Cultures, Societies, and the Individual*

Idea for revision of description: Include the sentence: *Some courses study human behavior in terms of such categories as the moral, the just, the reasonable, and the rational.*

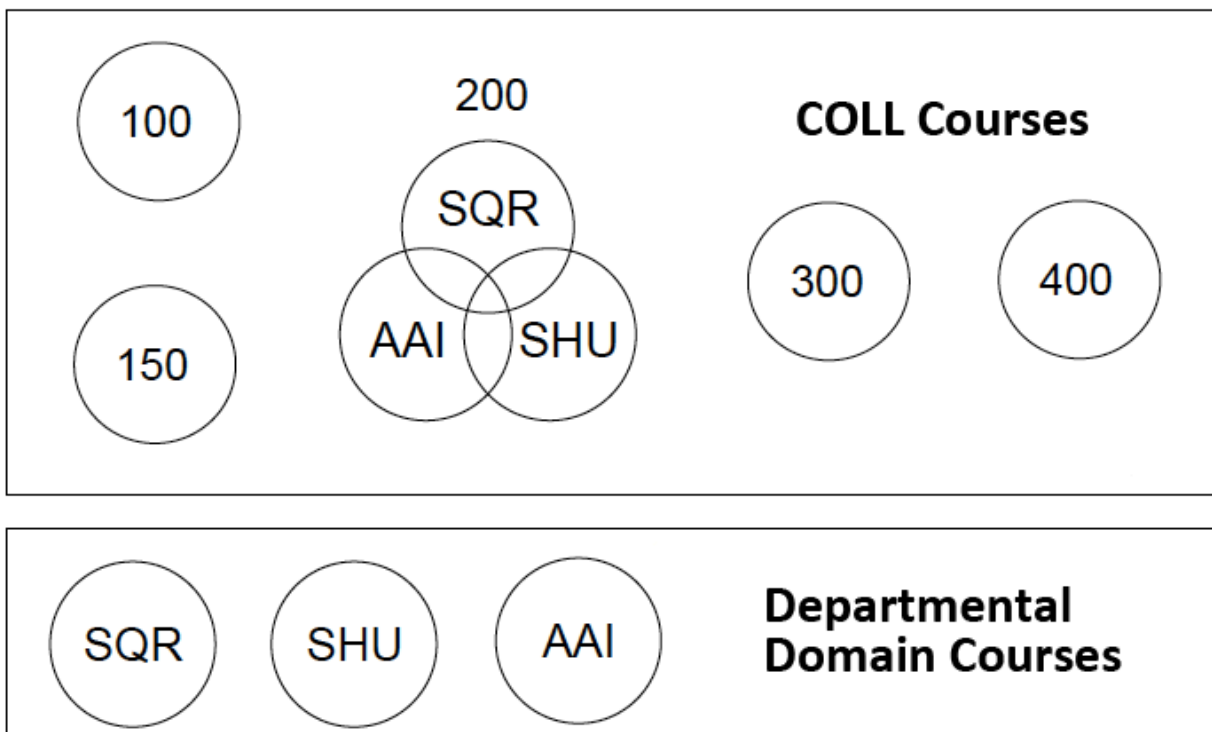
Scientific and Quantitative Reasoning (SQR). Courses in this domain study the realm of the natural world and the means by which humans observe, measure, and model it. Students learn how to gather and assess empirical data, develop hypotheses, and investigate the predictions of existing theories. Courses in this domain enhance understanding of the foundations, uses, and implications of scientific knowledge.

Discussion: Some faculty were concerned that this domain name implies that the scientific method and quantitative techniques are not used in the other domains.

Ideas for revision of name: *The Natural World and its Quantification* or *Natural Sciences and Quantification*

Idea for revision of description: None.

College Curriculum Framework



COLL 100 and COLL 150 are required of all first-year students. These two complementary courses provide a common experience for students and lay the

groundwork for a coherent Liberal Arts education. Both courses introduce students to the rigor and excitement of college-level work. To the extent possible, COLL 100 and COLL 150 are offered at times designated as common periods and COLL 100 courses are grouped into common themes.

COLL 100 courses emphasize inquiry and challenge students to think about important ideas. COLL 100 works to strengthen communication, especially visual and digital communication. Further, the course introduces students to academic inquiry and to academic resources at the College. Collaboration is also a focus of the course. This 4-credit course fulfills the state-mandated digital literacy requirement. (Year-end Report, modified)

COLL 150 courses are Freshman Seminars that challenge students to think deeply about a particular topic. COLL 150 works to strengthen written and oral communication. Students engage in in-depth study, with group discussion and deep readings of texts, data, or methods of inquiry from the discipline. This 4-credit course fulfills the lower-division writing requirement. (Year-end Report, modified)

COLL 200 courses introduce students to the Liberal Arts in an integrated manner. In addition to providing significant content, COLL 200 courses also call upon students to think critically about the discipline or disciplines represented in the course and how they fit into the broader framework of the Liberal Arts. Students are introduced to the ideas and methods of one knowledge domain while acknowledging and looking outward toward one or both of the other knowledge domains. COLL 200 courses carry 4 credits. Every student takes at least three COLL 200 courses, with at least one course in each domain. One COLL 200 must be taken in year 2. (Year-end Report, modified)

COLL 300 typically takes place in year 3. It asks that students use their knowledge, their emerging expertise in framing questions, and their communication skills to engage the world beyond campus.

Many students will fulfill the requirement through participation in the W&M D.C. programs, through active participation in credit-bearing initiatives such as the community Global Film Festival or the Regional Field Course in Geology, or through study abroad. In the latter case, students may study with W&M or non-W&M faculty. Other students will fulfill the requirement through the W&M Colloquium, a 2-credit course taught around a series of lectures by W&M faculty and visiting public intellectuals. As part of their teaching duties, a team of W&M faculty will lead the

Colloquium, teaching or overseeing short courses and engaged learning experiences for the students. Ideally, each domain in the College Curriculum is represented in the Colloquium. (New)

COLL 400 provides students with a culminating experience, and follows on the recommendation of the previous Curriculum Review Steering Committee, contained in the *Final Report on the UG Curriculum* (April 1993).

Many students may fulfill this requirement through required upper-level seminars or capstone courses offered through the major, through departmental Honors, or through other experiences that the majors deem appropriate for this purpose. Other students may fulfill the requirement through the W&M Liberal Arts Capstone, a variable-credit course taught by W&M faculty, where students share ideas and engage in synthesis, critique, and analysis. (New)

We realize that instituting a culminating experience for *all* students will affect the students and faculty of departments/programs in different ways, as not every department/program currently offers a capstone/senior experience. We suggest, therefore, that fundraising efforts and resource allocations be directed toward making it possible for all departments and programs, if they choose, to offer their own capstone/senior experiences.

Additional Departmental Credits in the Knowledge Domains. As appropriate, courses in the Undergraduate Catalog are designated as belonging to one (or more) of the three domains, and students are required to take at least 2 credits in each domain, completing a total of at least 6 credits in this way. (Year-end Report, modified)

Proficiencies. Two proficiencies are proposed:

Foreign Language Proficiency. We propose keeping the current Foreign Language Proficiency Requirement.

Mathematics/Quantitative Proficiency. This requirement can be satisfied by AP/IB credit, calculus, a statistics course designed to support study in the natural or social sciences, or a theory and practice of mathematics course that teaches mathematics in relation to college-level subjects. (Year-end Report, modified)

Advising. We recommend that the pre-major faculty advising program pay close attention to both the first- and second-year students. At the same time that the pre-

major advisors help students map their path through the College Curriculum, they will also provide direction on how to explore the full range of the Liberal Arts and discuss with them the benefits of an integrated, cohesive, and rigorous Liberal Arts education.

The Center. Our review brought to the forefront critical areas requiring enhanced support for faculty teaching and student learning. Broadly charged with supporting the courses, activities and initiatives of the College Curriculum, the proposed Center will provide support for faculty to design and teach COLL courses. The Center will support the enhanced faculty advising system and ensure student access to appropriate academic support in writing and other forms of communication and in math. (Year-end Report, p. 7)

Credit for Advanced Placement, International Baccalaureate, A-Levels, and Other Pre-Matriculation Examinations. We propose that these credits can be applied to the College Curriculum's proficiencies and to the three departmental domain courses but cannot be applied to the courses designated COLL (COLL 100, COLL 150, COLL 200, COLL 300, COLL 400).

Transfer students. Transfer students who enter the College with at least 24 credits, earned since high school graduation and accepted for credit at William & Mary, are not required to take COLL 100 and COLL 150. (See Appendix A, B.)

Appendix A:

Review of Current Policies In the Undergraduate Catalog

The Committee has reviewed current policies described in the Undergraduate Catalog (Academic Regulations, Requirements for Degrees, 2012-13 Undergraduate Catalog, pp. 44-66) and considered these policies in relation to the College Curriculum. Below we note and address relevant policies affected by the College Curriculum.

System of Grading | Pass/Fail (p. 49)

We propose that COLL 300 and COLL 400 be graded pass/fail. (Year-end Report)

Credit for Advanced Placement, International Baccalaureate, A-Levels, and Other Pre-Matriculation Examinations (p. 54)

We propose that these credits can be applied to the College Curriculum's proficiencies and to the three departmental domain courses but cannot be applied to the courses designated COLL (COLL 100, COLL 150, COLL 200, COLL 300, COLL 400).

Transfer Credit (p. 58)

We propose that transfer students who enter the College with at least 24 credits, earned since high school graduation and accepted for credit at William & Mary, are not required to take COLL 100 and COLL 150. Transfer credits earned prior to matriculation at the College can be applied to the College Curriculum's proficiencies, to the three departmental domain courses, but cannot be applied to COLL 200, COLL 300, or COLL 400.

Transfer Credit | Study Away, Study Abroad, Domestic Study Away, etc.

In some of these cases, W&M students take W&M classes taught by W&M professors. Where this is the case, we propose that the usual curriculum policies pertain. Where this is not the case, students must petition the Committee on Degrees. Approved study-abroad programs fulfill the COLL 300 requirement, and no petition is necessary.

Credit Hour Residency Requirement (p. 60)

We reaffirm this policy.

Ten Semester Rule

We reaffirm this policy.

Seventy-two Hour Rule

Some faculty feedback provided in our departmental visits suggested that this rule, limiting the number of major credits a student can apply toward the bachelor's degree, is overly restrictive and constrains students from assembling a competitive portfolio of courses for admission to

graduate programs. We note two possible solutions: (a) consider reducing the rule to 60 hours; or (b) exempt the departmental Honors credits from this rule.

Credit Hour Limitations in Dance, Applied Music, Military Science, Physical Activities, and Statistics

We reaffirm this policy.

Requests for Exemption

We note that a potential case warranting a petition to the Dean of Undergraduate Studies might be a student unable to take COLL 200 in the sophomore year (as required) because of other academic requirements.

Foreign Language Proficiency (p. 61)

We reaffirm this policy.

Mathematics | Quantitative Proficiency

We propose a Mathematics/Quantitative Proficiency, to be satisfied by AP/IB credit, calculus, a statistics course designed to support study in the natural or social sciences, or a theory and practice of mathematics course that teaches mathematics in relation to college-level subjects. (Year-end Report, modified)

Writing Proficiency | Lower-Division Writing Requirement (p. 62)

The College Curriculum satisfies this requirement through COLL 150: "this course works to strengthen written and oral communication, with an emphasis on writing. Students engage in an in-depth study into the topics, with group discussion and deep readings of texts, data, or methods of inquiry from the discipline. Assignments will include several short essays and a final project. This course fulfills the lower-division writing requirement." (Year-end Report, modified)

Writing Proficiency | Major Writing Requirement

We reaffirm this policy.

Digital Information Literacy Proficiency

The College Curriculum satisfies this requirement through COLL 100: "COLL 100 works to strengthen communication, especially visual and digital communication. Further, the course will introduce students to academic inquiry and to academic resources at the College. Collaboration will also be a focus of the course; one of the assignments will be a group presentation. This course fulfills the (state-mandated) digital literacy requirement." (Year-end Report, modified)

Major Computing Requirement

We propose that this requirement be removed from the College Curriculum and left to the individual department, program, or school. (New)

Freshman Seminar Requirement

COLL 150 is the Freshman Seminar. (Year-end Report)

Appendix B: Frequently Asked Questions

This list of FAQs is based on questions that arose frequently in our conversations with faculty.

Courses bearing the COLL designation

Can courses with the COLL designation also count toward a major? Yes.

What about the numbering of COLL courses—will department/program courses retain regular numbering? COLL courses can be cross-listed as regular department/program courses.

How will COLL courses appear on a student's transcript? We can list COLL courses on a student's transcript with a conventional department/program designation, and with a COLL curriculum designation.

Domains and COLL courses

To which domain does my department belong? As is the case in the current GER system, departments do not belong to a domain – courses do.

What about interdisciplinary courses? Will they be assigned to a single domain? Courses may be listed under two or more domains, but students will not be able to satisfy more than one domain requirement with a single course.

Does a department have to teach COLL courses at every level? No. As is the case now, all departments will contribute to the curriculum, but not necessarily to every part of it.

Will faculty be required to teach outside their areas of expertise? COLL courses do not require this. However, they do invite faculty members to expand their interests.

Does every COLL 100 class have to be interdisciplinary? No, but interdisciplinary classes are welcome.

Can COLL 100 classes be team-taught? Yes, but this is not required.

Do students have to take COLL 100 before COLL 150? No.

Does an individual professor have to cover all three domains in a single COLL 200 class? No.

Can COLL 200 classes be team-taught? Yes, but this is not required.

Does COLL 400 involve a portfolio? No. Early versions of our proposal involved a portfolio, but in response to faculty sentiment we have dropped that idea and proposed instead that COLL 400 be a capstone or culminating experience.

Does the culminating experience have to be done in the senior year? No. It may be done in the junior year when appropriate.

Will specific general education goals be added to my department's or program's senior experience? No. While changes emphasizing the Liberal Arts in the senior experiences offered by departments/programs would be welcome, these decisions are left to the discretion of the departments/programs.

General consequences for students

COLL 100 and COLL 200 are 4-credit courses. Does this mean they have 4 contact hours per week? Not necessarily. William & Mary already has in place criteria for separating credit hours from contact hours. We envision the 4 credits for COLL 100 and COLL 200 deriving from their intensive nature rather than the number of contact hours, as is already the case with our Freshman Seminars.

Do these 4-credit COLL courses mean that the Steering Committee wants the College to switch to a four-course student load per semester? No. Some departments may determine that a four-credit standard is appropriate; other departments may determine that it is not appropriate.

Consequences for particular majors

How will the new system affect pre-med students? Pre-med students will have room in their schedules for the demands of the College Curriculum. Students who arrive at William & Mary with no AP/IB credit or foreign language exemption will need to take care in planning.

How will the new system affect double majors? As in the current system, students pursuing double majors will have to plan carefully to fulfill all of their requirements; but we don't anticipate that the new system will be more onerous in that regard.

General questions

Is there evidence that an integrated Liberal Arts system will work? The Association of American Colleges and Universities and The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching have studied efforts at integrative learning at institutions throughout the country. They have found

that the pedagogies that engage students more deeply and that lead to integrative learning include problem-based learning, collaborative learning, and experiential learning.