

FAQs for the Transformed Core Curriculum Proposal UCC Task Force

Time Frame, Leadership, and Administration of the Transformed Core

Q: Assuming Faculty Council and the BOT approve the proposal, what are the next steps?

A: The UCC Task Force recommends that the Implementation Task Force (ITF) should be in place and start work in Summer of 2024. The Implementation Task Force should include, but is not limited to: a new UCC Director, representatives from University Governance, some members from the UCC Modernization Task Force (to ensure institutional knowledge), and representation from the Colleges.

Q: When would the new core curriculum be implemented?

A: The new core would be implemented for students matriculating in Fall semester of 2026.

Q: How would this new curriculum affect students who are currently enrolled?

A: The Implementation Task Force will develop a plan to “teach out” the current core for all students who matriculate before Fall semester of 2026.

Q: How long would a newly appointed UCC director hold the position?

A: The new UCC director should serve for a 3-year term, with the possibility of a 2-year extension to see the transformed UCC through the target Fall 2026 implementation date and beyond. The first director should be fully promoted and tenured and should begin their appointment in Summer 2024.

Structure of the Transformed Core

Q: Can a course be both a *Required Ways of Knowing* option and a *Beneficence Cluster* option?

A: No. Courses will not be listed in a Required Ways of Knowing menu and a Beneficence Cluster. This reinforces the distinctive goals of each component of the UCC structure. These two components fulfill different general education goals:

- 1) Required Ways of Knowing – Broad appeal courses, open to any and all students;
- 2) Beneficence Clusters – Courses aligned with one of the three Ways of Knowing *and* the Beneficence Cluster theme as well as tailored for specific student interests. Cluster options should be welcoming to students from all disciplines.

Q: How can we ensure these parts of the core (Foundations, Required Ways of Knowing and Beneficence Clusters) are distinctive?

A: Each part (Foundations/Required Ways of Knowing/Beneficence Clusters) will have their own set of distinctive student learning outcomes. The Foundations and Required Ways of Knowing outcomes have already been established through the Indiana College Core. The Implementation Task Force will establish learning outcomes for each Beneficence Cluster based on the thematic aims of the cluster and the student learning outcomes (SLOs) for each required Way of Knowing.

Q: Should courses in the core have pre-requisites?

A: No. It is the strong recommendation that courses in all three phases of the core should not have pre-reqs and be open to all students in all majors. We anticipate that many of the Ways of Knowing courses would align with the courses in the Core Transfer Library and a lot of those courses are already in our Tier One offerings and tend not to have pre-reqs.

Q: How many Beneficence clusters should there be?

A: This is ultimately a question for the Implementation Task Force and UCC Director. The UCC Task Force has developed a strong list of suggested clusters and recommends eight total, which includes one for transfer students and perhaps one for the Honors College. The UCC Task Force also recommends that cluster options be reviewed every five years to ensure they are meeting the needs of Ball State students in an evolving educational landscape.

Q: Should students be required to take one course from each Way of Knowing as part of fulfilling a Beneficence Cluster?

A: Faculty feedback to date supports designing Beneficence Clusters that require authentic transdisciplinary experience, and aligns more closely with our current broad liberal arts core curriculum. Students should be required to choose courses from the three distinct Ways of Knowing within a cluster, with the caveat that transfer students (or students with unique situations) may be granted exemptions.

Q: Can a course be listed in multiple clusters? If so, how many?

A: This is a question for the Implementation Task Force, but the recommendation of the current UCC Task Force is that a course should appear in no more than two clusters to ensure that a course can meaningfully address its thematic congruency with the Beneficence Cluster definition, and to ensure that all colleges and programs are represented in the UCC.

Q: When will colleges and departments begin to develop and propose courses to populate the Required Ways of Knowing and the Clusters?

A: The Implementation Task Force should begin its work in Summer of 2024 and guidelines for proposals should be in place by Fall of 2024. The Implementation Task Force will need to establish guidelines as well around when the UCC should stop reviewing new courses for inclusion in the existing UCC.

Populating the Transformed Core

Q: How will the Implementation Task Force identify the course options for the Required Ways of Knowing and Beneficence Clusters? Our examples have been based in the current Tier 1/Tier 2 options—should this be our guiding methodology moving forward?

A: Departments will present courses for approval in a process that is similar to what is done now for UCC approval, and the Implementation Task Force will develop a specific template with criteria and guidelines for creating proposals. This will be done in alignment with the standards for inclusion in the Ways of Knowing established by the ITF. Inclusion into a Beneficence Cluster will follow a similar process, abiding by the standards set by the UCC Director and the Implementation Task Force.

Q: Should the Implementation Task Force encourage the retention of certain courses in either group?

A: Since we will be abandoning the terms "Tier 1" and "Tier 2," there will be no need for keeping courses labeled as such. As for Ways of Knowing and/or Beneficence Cluster inclusion, that will be determined based on the defined standards set by the Implementation Task Force and the UCC Director.

Q: Will there be an expedited process for reviewing and approving courses currently in the core for inclusion in the new core?

A: There will not be a specific expedited process. However, it is worth noting that once the Implementation Task Force and UCC Director have done their work setting standards for how and where a course should go, there will naturally be a flurry of quick activity for all involved parties to be ready for student enrollment for AY 2026/2027.

Q: What else can departments do to prepare for the new core implementation?

A: Departments should review current UCC courses to see how they might fit in the new proposed UCC and may wish to remove barriers (such as pre-reqs) to help make courses more accessible for students. Because this is an opportunity to imagine a new UCC, departments can also consider the development of new courses for the core.

Q: Will current core courses be included in the new core?

A: No. departments do not have to include current UCC classes in the new core. The Handbook currently states that courses that have not run in two years need to be removed from the core.

Also, current core classes that do not fit into the new UCC structure and clusters should be omitted or revised.

Writing in the Disciplines, Best Practices, and Assessment for the Transformed Core: Discussion Questions

Q: How will we determine whether a course taught within a program is an appropriate option for the introductory course in Writing and Research? Should course options at this level have prerequisites and/or major restrictions?

A: This course is intended to be an **introductory course** to Writing and Research skills and should focus on research-based writing. Colleges may continue to require students to take ENG 104 or may want to develop a more discipline-specific version of the course; however, this course should be available to all students, have no pre-requisites, and should not be designed for students in one particular major. Colleges wishing to develop their own options for this requirement must collaborate with the UCC Director and the Writing Program Administrator.

This collaborative process will also ensure the development of shared SLOs for all courses fulfilling this requirement, regardless of where they are offered. These shared SLOs will ensure the development of a shared and transferable skill set in writing and research, regardless of the programmatic context in which they are developed. Colleges wishing to develop their own options for this requirement should design the course to focus primarily on research-based writing skills, address the shared SLOs, and be accessible to interested students regardless of their declared program of study.

Q: What role, if any, will priorities like TABS, High Impact Practices, NACE Competencies, and best practices for retention play in this new core? How will we select and approach these priorities in the process of reviewing courses for approval in the UCC?

A: The current UCC Task Force provides a few recommendations and considerations for the Implementation Task Force as its members begin their work:

- Given that all courses will have to (re)apply to be considered as part of the Ways of Knowing and Beneficence Clusters, programs have an opportunity to reconsider their current core courses and the ways they are delivered.
- When courses are designed and taught according to best pedagogical practices, they function as an antidote to faculty burnout and increase student success metrics (see [HERE](#)).
- A high percentage of students (both [nationally](#) and at BSU) report that the cost of educational materials are barriers to enrollment, success, and engagement.
- Support to adopt affordable materials, eBooks, reading lists, and OER materials is [readily available at BSU](#). These measures can greatly increase student satisfaction, engagement, and retention.
- As such, the UCC Task Force recommends that all courses approved for the Beneficence Clusters can be delivered for \$40 or less.

- The UCC Task Force also recommends that courses approved for the Beneficence Clusters are connected to the [Director of High Impact Practices](#) and the [Career Center](#) to better understand how they can prepare to tag their courses as HIPs or NACE.
- The UCC Task Force also recommends that the new Writing and Research Within the Ways of Knowing courses connect with the Writing Center and the Director of High Impact Practices to explore best practices in writing and undergraduate research.

Q: How will we manage course assessment for the core?

A: Our current core has a clear assessment plan in place that works, and that can easily be implemented with the new core. The current Gen Ed assessment framework helps institute a culture of accountability, learning, and improvement, while accounting for the learning curves of faculty and staff involved with implementation.

In the recent accreditation visit by the Higher Learning Commission (HLC), peer reviewers made the following comments about our Gen Ed assessment practices:

- The general education assessment strategy was reviewed and revised in 2019 via a faculty driven process which resulted in a new strategy for assessing general education which is grounded in best practice.
- Assessment plans and institutional processes include both direct and indirect assessment measures, and annual reports include a section dedicated to closing the loop.
- It is very apparent that the culture of assessment is robust, and the institution is committed to assessing for learning and improvement.
- Resources for the development of assessment methodologies that follow best practices are ample.

Q: How will we ensure the transformed UCC fulfills the SLOs outlined by the ICC?

A: Current UCC assessment processes will be adapted for the transformed core. [Expectations for assessment and reporting](#) will be made clear from the beginning. Currently, assessment reports from faculty and programs are encouraged annually but required at least every other year to help ensure that (a) courses continue to contribute to the goals of the UCC/Gen Ed program, (b) learning outcomes are assessed, and (c) improvements are made as needed. Examples of improvements noted in recent assessment reports are [available on the website](#). At the institutional level, attainment of the learning outcomes is aggregated by transformation and posted on the website. This practice can continue, with learning outcomes aggregated by competency (instead of by transformation) in the new core.

Other considerations for the Implementation Task Force

Q: What other recommendations does this group want to make to the Implementation Task Force to frame their work?

A: The UCC Task Force strongly recommends that, immediately upon the appointment of the Implementation Task Force and the new UCC Director, they prioritize developing the guidelines and processes by which courses may be approved for both the Ways of Knowing and Beneficence Clusters.

The uniqueness of the “cluster” concept is an important selling point of Ball State’s proposed UCC. Thus, the UCC Task Force envisions faculty ambassadors or “champions” for each individual cluster, who would introduce advisors and new faculty to the transdisciplinary aims and objectives of each cluster. The champion would serve as a guide to faculty, encouraging best practices and ensuring that our UCC adheres to the highest pedagogical standards. During the implementation phases, cluster champions would assist in crafting positive messaging surrounding the transformed UCC, and would be instrumental in evaluating courses for inclusion in the curriculum. Beyond the implementation period, champions might serve as peer evaluators, assess achievement of course, cluster, and curriculum objectives, oversee revisions, and facilitate collaborative communication among disciplines represented in the cluster.

Q: What additional supports will need to be in place?

A: There will need to be special consideration for transfer students, including students who come in with dual credit; clear support and training for advising; alignment with the ICC and students bringing partial ICC credit; and predictive analytics to ensure that we have adequate options for students in each category and that courses listed in the core run regularly.

Q: What will departments need to be aware of in terms of curriculum revision?

A: Each program will have an additional six hours, which can be used for additional elective hours or could be used for a first year experience/capstone bookend sequence, professional development courses, college core curriculum courses, etc. Given the reduction of the Core curriculum from 36 hours to 30 hours, there will be a curriculum revision process required for all programs, and guidance will be forthcoming. Deans might want to consider bringing in a course mapping or curriculum specialist to help with this process.

Q: How might the current UCC committee need to be reconfigured to accommodate the new core?

A: This is a question for the Implementation Task Force, but the current Task Force recommends adding the UCC Director as a member of the UCC committee.