

Agriculture and the Baccalaureate Core

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Graduating well-rounded students at the bachelor's degree level has been the goal of colleges and universities for decades. The thinking has been that all students should take a general education core of courses to give them a broad perspective of the sciences, humanities, arts, and social sciences, etc. Typical general education models have requirements for a certain number of credits in each of these fields, intended to give the students the broad understandings needed. In practice, however, students could become very narrowly focused in these models. For example, in the humanities, students could choose all of their credits from one area such as music or history.

At Oregon State University, the current general education model includes English composition, communications, physical education, humanities and arts, social science, and physical science. The credits in the core total a minimum of 51 quarter hours. With 192 credits required for graduation, the core amounts to 27 percent of the total.

As part of a proposed move to a semester system at Oregon State, a university-wide task force was formed to review and revise the general education core. The group was given the freedom to start with a clean slate and build a new core. Recently, it was determined that the university would not move to a semester system, but the new core would be adopted for the quarter system. The new core is not as closely associated with disciplines as in the past but more associated with topics. It includes courses in three areas:

- Skills
- Perspectives
- Synthesis.

The new core includes the following:

Skills

Writing I	3 credits
Writing II	3 credits
Writing III/Speech	3 credits
Mathematics	3 credits
Fitness	3 credits
WIC (Writing Intensive Course, upper division, included in credits for the major)	

Perspectives

Physical Science (w/lab)	4 credits
Biological Science (w/lab)	4 credits
+ choice of either (w/lab)	4 credits
Western Culture	3 credits
Non-Western Culture	3 credits
Literature and the Arts	3 credits
Social Processes and Institutions	3 credits
+ two additional courses in two of the four preceding areas	6 credits

Synthesis

Contemporary Global Issues	3 credits
Science, Technology, and Society	3 credits
TOTAL (in addition to WIC)	51 credits

Features of the new core, besides the topic versus the discipline orientation, include a vertical structure with upper division components comprising 6 credits of synthesis courses, plus the WIC course in the student's major. All units in the

university were allowed to nominate courses for the core.

Departments in the College of Agricultural Sciences have submitted several courses for the baccalaureate core in both the *Perspectives* and *Synthesis* areas, with one being approved in the *Perspectives* area and nine in the *Synthesis* area. With the acceptance of these ten courses, Agriculture Sciences now become part of the baccalaureate core, a position which those of us in agriculture have felt was needed for some time. The new baccalaureate core began Fall 1990. It is not yet known how fully our courses will be used by students from other colleges, i.e. Science, Liberal Arts and Business. The Agricultural Sciences courses currently approved are:

Perspectives -- Western Culture

FW (Fisheries and Wildlife) 201, *Nature and the Western Mind.*

Synthesis -- Science Technology And Society

RNG (Rangeland Resources) 477, *Agroforestry.*

SLS (Soils) 390, *World Soil Resources.*

FST (Food Science and Technology), *Food Law.*

Synthesis -- Contemporary Global Issues

AG/ANTH 482, *World Food and the Cultural Implications of International Agricultural Development.*

FW 325, *Global Crisis in Resource Ecology.*

RNG 468, *International Rangeland Development.*

AREC (Agricultural and Resource Economics) 361, *Agricultural and Food Policy Issues.*

AREC 431, *International Agricultural Development.*

AREC 351, *Natural Resource Management.*

In the Western Culture area there are 58 courses approved, with one from Agricultural Sciences. In the Science, Technology, and Society group, there are 29 courses approved; the three from Agricultural Sciences give the college 10% of the total. In the Contemporary Global Issues area, 29 courses are approved, with seven of those from Agricultural Sciences, a 25% share for the college. Combining the *Synthesis* areas, the college has 17% of the courses approved so far. Other courses from departments of the College of Agricultural Sciences have been proposed, with some being denied and others still in the process of being evaluated for acceptance. Acceptance to the baccalaureate core is on a course by course basis and not on a department or college basis.

Dr. Myles Brand, Provost of The Ohio State University addressed the topic of general education of agriculture students at the North Central Administrative Symposium of CAHA in October, 1988. He stated, "Undergraduate students, in any discipline, must have a broad foundation from which to draw when they face challenges and engage in new learning situations throughout their lives." He further stated, "Agriculture courses should be a part of this educational base for the entire university." Perhaps Oregon State University's baccalaureate core is another sign of the times ahead when Colleges of Agriculture will be looked at as being able to offer significant contributions to the education of all students.

Reference

Brand, Myles. The General Education of Agriculture Students. Proceedings, North Central Administrative Symposium, CAHA. October, 1988.

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