

The full report of the Task Force on the Undergraduate Academic Experience is available at:
http://www.northwestern.edu/provost/docs/TaskForceReport_Jan2016.pdf

APPENDIX 1: RECOMMENDATIONS SUMMARY TABLE

| Issue | Proposal(s) | Key Points and Recommendations |
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| A. Modifying the academic calendar | A1. Adopt a “10-5-5-10” Calendar. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Academic year shifts five weeks earlier to align with schedules of semester schools A five-week “early session” of winter quarter precede a holiday break; a five-week “late session” follows A split winter quarter structure may allow innovative course structures |
| B. Achieving a cohesive, consolidated academic experience across schools | B1. Develop a set of “Common Experience” courses that would bring together students of multiple schools in one classroom. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> All courses would explore a multi-faceted theme from a range of scholarly approaches Each course would have students from multiple schools but would remain relatively small, with no more than 30 students per course |
| | B2. To the extent possible, align the graduation requirements that are common to all undergraduate schools through an Undergraduate Education faculty working group. <p>B2a. Normalize AP credits accepted in all schools.</p> <p>B2b. Normalize the foreign language requirement.</p> <p>B2c. Update and normalize distribution requirements across schools.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Charges could include: “Common Experience” courses; diversity requirements; normalizing AP credits and foreign language requirements; reexamining and aligning distribution requirements; and supporting elective courses This working group may also consider whether guidelines for grading or assessment would be desirable as well as the possibility of creating a pass/fail term The goal would be to find the balance between requirements that fulfill core learning outcomes and room for electives that promote students’ agency to forge novel academic paths The best format may be an intersection of existing committees or the formation of a new group. |
| | B3. Workload Experience <p>B3a. Maintain a reasonable academic workload for each course by limiting each one-credit course to an average of up to ten committed hours per week.</p> <p>B3b. Decrease the total required academic workload through school-specific reductions of required credits (where possible) or committed hours (elsewhere).</p> <p>B3c. Make the workload more flexible by allowing courses to be dropped as needed, without unrelated long-term negative consequences related to financial aid.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Schools could explore ways to reduce the total workload to 30 hours per week in at least three quarters that currently require 40 hours per week of coursework In schools with a 45-credit graduation requirement, reduced workloads could be achieved by reducing requirements to 42 credits Encourage all majors and programs to engage in a cross-disciplinary review of requirements Increase course offerings in the summer and make institutional aid for courses taken during 13th quarter readily available Examine current difficulties of re-entry after medical leave, administrative and financial aid hurdles, and scheduling barriers to achieving a flexible workload |

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| C. Collectively shaping perceptions that influence the undergraduate academic experience | C1. Actively ensure that Northwestern's messages guide students toward balancing and benefiting from both individually focused and community-based elements of education. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Expand the number of available for-credit courses and extra-curricular discussion groups that include considerations of academic, emotional, and intellectual development Assess Northwestern applicants' team membership skills, experiences dealing with failure, or engagement in restorative activities Communicate to students that many employers value depth of achievement and caliber of experience as well as numbers of activities |
| D. Supporting wellness through Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) and Advising | D1. Provide additional resources to increase the availability of counseling and psychological services in terms of number of providers as well as session numbers. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> For students on full or nearly full financial aid, provide membership in Northwestern University student insurance |
| | D2. Advising D2a. Provide resources to decrease the number of students seen by a single academic adviser. D2b. Coordinate interactions among advisers, possibly through a personalized advising site for each student. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consider the creation of a leadership position whose role would be to coordinate advisers as well as deal with complications or ambiguities across advising systems Develop a personalized, privileged advising site for each student that can be viewed by the student and all of their advisers |
| E. Facilitating, supporting, and rewarding effective teaching in and out of the classroom | E1. Initiate a Continuing Higher Education Credits Program to foster and reward faculty for commitment to high-quality teaching, both within and outside the classroom. E1a. Grant teaching credit for cross-departmental teaching and teaching in residential colleges and service learning courses (or the equivalent). E1b. Make course evaluations (CTECs) compulsory. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continuing Higher Education Credits (CHEC) could be "cashed in" to support the faculty member's scholarship CHEC credits would be given to tenure-line and non-tenure line faculty who seek training and who offer training. This system intentionally does not penalize those faculty members whose primary contribution is through means other than teaching Students would be required to fill out CTECs in order to see their grades for that quarter |
| | E2. Expand and support undergraduate research opportunities. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide stipends to labs that house undergraduate researchers and to graduate students or post-docs who supervise these students Increase number and amount of Undergraduate Language Grants |
| F. Supporting teaching in large classes | F1. Initiate a Teaching Fellows Program. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The teaching fellows program would centrally support postdocs or recent PhD graduates in proportion to their time spent assisting faculty with teaching and training other TAs |

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| G. Orientation to, placement in, and access to academics | G1. Use Canvas for an online summer orientation course for newly arriving international students. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A program similar to the International Summer Institute could be offered to a subset of undergraduate international students who can transmit this knowledge to international peers • All incoming international undergraduates could also participate in an online course |
| | G2. Continue to support data collection and analysis to ensure the appropriate placement of students. G2a. Assume financial responsibility for over-the-cap course materials cost. G2b. Further financial considerations. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Incorporate placement examinations into Canvas summer orientation courses for all students • Enforce prerequisites at the time of registration • Set a reasonable cap that any student, regardless of financial aid status, should be expected to pay for course materials • If a student's cost goes over that cap, the university would cover the balance to ensure that students are not excluded from classes because of financial considerations |
| | G3. Extend financial aid package for a fifth year for Pell grant awardees who qualify for a bachelor-master degree program. | |
| H. Assessment | H1. Provide clearly articulated grading policies in each class so that assessments are well connected to grades. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide students with timely assessment feedback throughout the course • Whether common definitions of grades are desirable and whether one term should be Pass/Fail may be considered by the proposed Undergraduate Education working group |
| | H2. Continue to help faculty members clearly articulate learning goals or outcomes for each course and communicate these to students. | |
| | H3. Encourage faculty to give specific thought to the forms of assessments and how these translate into grades. | |
| I. Classrooms | I1. Build and/or renovate more classrooms, especially for class sizes of 30-50. | |
| | I2. Assessment Types of Classroom Space I2a. Create a Classroom Space Workgroup responsible for addressing changes in the types of spaces available at the University. I2b. Evaluate the effectiveness of different uses and designs of learning spaces through the Searle Center for Advancing Teaching and Learning. I2c. Continue to respond to technological developments and their effects on teaching and learning. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The workgroup may be modeled after the Faculty Distance Learning Workgroup or the charge could be added to the Faculty Distance Learning Workgroup's directive • Seed funding could be provided for the innovation in the use and development of classroom space • This workgroup would work in tandem or inform the Classroom Committee • Offer opportunities to ensure that students with different levels of technological facility will develop the necessary technical abilities for success • Continue to be attentive to how emerging technologies influence classroom spaces and the people within them |