

**Weinberg College of Arts & Sciences**  
**Ad Hoc Committee on Degree Requirements (CDR)**  
**Interim Report for Discussion**  
**Winter 2017**

**Background**

The CDR was convened by Dean Adrian Randolph in February 2016 and charged with a review of the Weinberg College degree requirements. In particular, the CDR was asked to articulate learning outcomes that capture the skill-set and mind-set that should characterize a Weinberg College graduate. The CDR was asked to pay particularly close attention to the general education requirements and to the proposed social inequalities and diversity requirement. (See the appendix for the CDR purpose, charge, procedures, and membership.)

The CDR met regularly over the course of winter and spring 2016. During the spring quarter, the CDR formed three sub-groups each charged with reviewing and recommending changes to one of the three major components of the current Weinberg degree requirements, the writing requirement, the foreign language requirement, and the distribution requirements. During the summer, the sub-groups continued their discussions and began to articulate recommendations. In September, the full committee came together for a day-long meeting at the Chicago Botanic Gardens to discuss and synthesize the outcomes of the sub-group deliberations.

This interim report presents a preliminary statement of our vision and outlines a first draft of our recommendations for revision of the Weinberg College degree requirements. We are interested in gauging reaction to our ideas as we continue to grapple with several open questions. At this point, our primary aim is to facilitate constructive discussion with colleagues and students across the college, the outcomes of which will inform the process of refining and revising the proposals.

**Overall Vision and Learning Outcomes**

The CDR was charged with developing a set of learning outcomes for the Weinberg curriculum. We approached this task by articulating a key question: *What should a Weinberg graduate know and be able to do upon graduation?*

We sought responses to this question in various places:

- The learning goals proposed by the [Task Force on the Undergraduate Academic Experience](#)
- Peer institutions, with particular attention to:
  - Duke (<http://admin.trinity.duke.edu/curriculum/trinity-curriculum>)
  - Harvard (<https://college.harvard.edu/academics/planning-your-degree/general-education>)
  - Stanford (<http://exploreddegrees.stanford.edu/undergraduatedegreesandprograms/#gerstext>)
  - Washington University (<http://college.artsci.wustl.edu/academics/IQrequirements>)
- Responses to our key question from various sources including:
  - CDR members during winter 2016
  - the CDR website publicized to all Weinberg faculty (specifically, responses submitted through the [share-your-thoughts](#) page)

- Interviews during spring and summer 2016 with colleagues who play key roles in the current curriculum

These rich and varied sources guided our approach to specifying college-wide learning outcomes and their relationship to the Weinberg degree requirements.

As part of this process, we found it useful to describe our curriculum in terms of three inter-connected levels.

**Level 1** -- broadly defined learning outcomes that characterize the “Weinberg Way”

**Level 2** -- college-wide requirements that guide Weinberg students to design programs of study that encompass the learning outcomes specified in Level 1

**Level 3** -- courses, majors, and minors that challenge Weinberg students to develop and practice the skills that characterize the Weinberg Way

The work of the CDR focuses on levels 1 and 2, leaving level 3 for departments and programs. Below we offer the CDR’s preliminary proposals for these two levels of the Weinberg curriculum.

### **Level 1 -- The Weinberg Way**

We identified several recurring themes and categories in the responses to our key question -- *What should a Weinberg graduate know and be able to do upon graduation?* These categories were then distilled into the following four proposed learning outcomes.

As a Weinberg student you will learn to:

1. **Observe:** Weinberg students cultivate curiosity and seek encounters with the world, both on and beyond the campus limits.
2. **Critique:** Weinberg students develop the ability to make reasoned decisions and develop hypotheses based on empirical evidence, the critical skills to become informed interpreters of information, an understanding of how to approach a moral problem, and the capacity to differentiate between data and information that you can trust, and that which you can’t.
3. **Reflect:** Weinberg students cultivate a consciousness and understanding of one’s place in the world that is both historical and global, and an understanding that one’s subjectivity and perspective are products of interconnected webs of people, ideas, and events.
4. **Express:** Weinberg students improve their ability to articulate their ideas in oral, written, visual and other media, and to assemble narratives that navigate carefully ordered evidence.

### **Level 2 -- The Weinberg Degree Requirements**

The CDR’s approach to the review and revision of the Weinberg degree requirements was driven by the structure of the current Weinberg curriculum. The rationale behind this approach was twofold. First, there was general agreement that the categories of the current curriculum – writing/first year seminars, foreign language, and distribution requirements -- function quite well. Second, college-wide familiarity with these categories provided us with an effective and efficient starting point for discussions with faculty and students. The committee sought carefully-considered and creative ways to capitalize on the successes of the existing structure, while simultaneously making the curriculum more meaningful and flexible for Weinberg students today.

The overall structure of the proposed Weinberg degree requirements is designed to guide students through a course of study that develops all aspects of intellection. Within this structure, students and faculty meet in courses that variously emphasize the learning outcomes at the root of the Weinberg Way – Observe, Critique, Reflect, Express.

### Schematic overview of proposed Weinberg degree requirements

<b>Foundational Competencies</b> (6-9 credits)	First Year Fall Seminar (1 credit)																			
	First Year Writing Seminar (1 credit)																			
	Advanced Writing Seminar (1 credit)																			
	World Language (6 credits, min. 3 at NU)																			
<b>Foundational Disciplines</b> (11 credits)	Natural Sciences (2 credits)																			
	Quantitative Reasoning (2 credits)																			
	Social & Behavioral Studies (2 credits)																			
	Historical Studies (2 credits)																			
	Humanities and Arts (3 credits)																			
Major & Electives (25 credits)																				

**Interdisciplinary Overlays** (each overlay must be placed over one credit unit)

Ethics	Social Inequalities & Diversities	
	USA 	Global 

### Explanatory Notes

#### Foundational Competencies, Foundational Disciplines, and Interdisciplinary Overlays

Our internal discussions and review of curricula at peer institutions revealed a widely-held understanding that some requirements aim to develop competencies (also referred to as approaches, skills, or ways) while others revolve around academic disciplines (also referred to as topic areas, methods of inquiry, or sectors of knowledge). In keeping with this distinction between competencies and disciplines, the proposed college-wide requirement system is defined by a set of **Foundational Competencies** (Writing, or more generally modes of expression, and World Language) and **Foundational Disciplines** (now five, rather than six subject areas: Natural Sciences, Quantitative Reasoning, Social and Behavioral Sciences, Historical Studies, and Humanities and Arts). Added to this foundational structure is a set of **Interdisciplinary Overlays** that can be understood as a series of lenses through which the foundational academic disciplines can be viewed. These lenses serve to direct focus to issues and values that are central to our time and place.

Critically, the interdisciplinary overlays do not add to the number of requirements, but instead introduce themes that can be emphasized in courses across the curriculum. For each overlay, a specific set of learning outcomes will be articulated, and courses taken across a student’s program of study that address a given overlay’s learning outcomes could satisfy that overlay requirement. In other words, the overlays could potentially be placed over any of a student’s courses, including courses taken for the major(s), minor(s), and as electives.

The foundations-and-overlays structure is implemented by re-envisioning the current subject area V, Ethics and Values, as an overlay rather than as a foundational discipline. The proposed Ethics overlay is now situated within a set of additional overlays giving the curriculum a series of values-based lenses through which the foundational competencies and disciplines are viewed. Importantly, the proposed curriculum introduces overlays in Social Inequalities and Diversities, one with a focus on the USA and a second with a global orientation. This significant innovation in the curriculum responds directly to student demand and is informed by discussions and curricular developments enabled by several years of the Hewlett Fellows Program.

#### First Year Seminar and Foundational Competency in Writing

The CDR proposes a dissociation of the writing requirement from the fall quarter first year seminar requirement. In particular, we envision a **First Year Fall Seminar** requirement modeled after the current First Year Seminar requirement but with the critical difference that the proposed fall seminars would have no explicit writing focus. Instead, students would be required to take a second seminar, a **First Year Writing Seminar**, typically in the winter or spring of the first year, taught by faculty with an interest and training in the teaching of writing (typically, but not necessarily exclusively, faculty in the Cook Family Writing Program).

In addition, an **Advanced Writing Seminar** is proposed. This seminar would be taken later in the students course of study (typically in the second year or beyond), and would be managed at the department (or division) level. These Advanced Writing Seminars would likely vary significantly depending on the direction of individual students' academic programs.

#### World Language Requirement

The CDR proposes retaining the current requirement of demonstrated proficiency in a second language at the intermediate level (equivalent to two years of college-level language study). We also propose the introduction of a minimum number of language courses to be taken at Northwestern. Specifically, the CDR proposes that all Weinberg students must take a minimum of three language courses at Northwestern. Students who achieve intermediate proficiency (equivalent to two years of study) of a non-native language upon arrival at Northwestern or after taking fewer than this minimum of three courses at Northwestern, would have the option of taking lower level courses in another language or of taking advanced courses in their previously-studied language.

This three-course minimum aims to shift the emphasis of the language requirement from proficiency to an emphasis on language proficiency as a foundational component of (a wider) global cultural competence. This also recognizes that languages courses offered by university language departments are distinguished by their broad literary and cultural context.

#### Change in requirement designations

Three changes in requirement designations are proposed in order to bring our nomenclature in line with an updated vision for and understanding of our requirements. Specifically, the CDR proposes replacing "Foreign Language" with "World Language," "Literature and Fine Arts" with "Humanities and Arts," and "Formal Studies" with "Quantitative Reasoning."

Number of Humanities and Arts required credits

An additional Humanities and Arts requirement (three rather than the current two in the Literature and Fine Arts area) is proposed to account for the expectation that this foundational discipline is likely to be particularly amenable to the learning outcomes of the overlay requirements.

**Side-by-side comparison of current and proposed degree requirements**

Current total = 45 credits	Proposed total = 45 credits
First-Year Seminar (2 credits) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• small, theme- or issue-based, writing- and discussion-oriented</li> </ul>	First Year Fall Seminar (1 credit) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• small, theme- or issue-based with advising on general academic and transition-to-college skills (no explicit writing component)</li> </ul>
Writing Proficiency <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• usually demonstrated through work in the First-Year Seminars</li> </ul>	Foundational Competency: Writing (2 credits) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• First Year Writing Seminar: winter or spring of 1st year, strong writing emphasis, taught mostly by <i>Cook Family Writing Program</i> faculty</li> <li>• Advanced Writing Seminar: department- or division-based with broad latitude as appropriate for various field-specific research and presentation skills</li> </ul>
Foreign Language Proficiency <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• demonstrated proficiency equivalent to 2 years of college-level instruction</li> <li>• AP credits allowed</li> </ul>	Foundational Competency: World Language <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• demonstrated proficiency equivalent to 2 years of college-level instruction</li> <li>• AP credits for placement only, at language department's discretion</li> <li>• minimum of 3 language courses must be taken at Northwestern</li> <li>• The 3 minimum courses may be (a) part of the set of courses used to demonstrate proficiency, or (b) advanced courses beyond the required proficiency level (which may also satisfy other requirements), or (c) introductory courses in a World Language other than the one in which proficiency is established.</li> </ul>
Distribution Areas (12 credits)	Foundational Disciplines (11 credits)
I: Natural Sciences (2 credits)	I: Natural Science (2 credits)
II: Formal Studies (2 credits)	II: Quantitative Reasoning (2 credits)
III: Social & Behavioral Sciences (2 credits)	III: Social & Behavioral Sciences (2 credits)
IV: Historical Studies (2 credits)	IV: Historical Studies (2 credits)
VI: Literature & Fine Arts (2 credits)	V: Humanities and Arts (3 credits)
V: Ethics & Values (2 credits)	Interdisciplinary Overlays (3 overlays) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• do not add to the number of required credits</li> <li>• infuse value-based themes across the curriculum</li> <li>• minimum of 1 in each of the following areas:                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Ethics</li> <li>○ Social Inequalities &amp; Diversities in the USA</li> <li>○ Social Inequalities &amp; Diversities across the globe</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
Major and electives (25 credits)	Major and electives (25 credits)

## **Development and resource implications**

### New course development

#### *First Year Writing Seminars:*

Development of these courses would fall primarily on the *Cook Family Writing Program*, although other faculty with interest in developing expertise in the teaching of writing and other communication skills could participate too. These seminars hold some potential for introduction of a “common experience” course into the Weinberg curriculum (a recommendation of the UAETF).

#### *Advanced Writing Seminars:*

It would be left to departments or divisions to define and develop these advanced seminars, which may vary substantially depending on the nature of advanced work in the subject area. It is recognized that different areas may prefer different relative emphases on written, oral, and other modes of communication, and development of field-specific research skills. We note that many departments already offer courses that match the broad goals of this proposal. Such courses could be retained in their current form or modified for broader student enrollment. We view this proposal as an opportunity for significant, inter- and multi-disciplinary curricular innovation.

#### *Quantitative Reasoning:*

This is a new topic area that will require development of new courses or significant modification of existing courses (e.g. modification of existing Formal Studies courses). This may be another potential opportunity for development of Weinberg signature courses that could form the basis for a “common experience” course.

#### *Interdisciplinary overlays:*

The overlays will each require specification of their own learning outcomes. A well-developed and successful model for the Social Inequalities and Diversities overlays is already in place as part of the Hewlett Fellows program.

### Innovative teaching possibilities

The proposed revision would encourage departments and program to take a fresh look at the courses that they offer within each foundational discipline or competency, as well as for each of the overlays. We hope that this will encourage development of new courses at a generalist level as well as courses that span traditional areas. We hope to incentivize development of interdisciplinary courses with new team-teaching possibilities. This might include developing courses that allow students with advanced skills in a language other than English to use those skills for the benefit of academic work in various areas (e.g. a course on Chinese History in which students were offered the opportunity for significant amounts of advanced reading, discussion, and writing in Mandarin). (For good examples of this type of languages-across-the-curriculum approach, see <https://trinity.duke.edu/clac>).

### Resources for new course development

Based on the notable success of the current Hewlett Fellows Program, we propose exploring the possibility of deploying the considerable resources of the Hewlett Fund to support the significant new faculty effort that the proposed revisions would necessitate.

### Four scenarios of progress towards the Weinberg degree

All scenarios assume no AP or other test or transfer credits, no double major, no minor, no overloads, and all 3 overlay courses (Ethics, and Social Inequalities and Diversities) always count towards other requirements as well.

#### Scenario 1: Bio major (Natural Sciences and Quantitative Reasoning double-count within the major.)

Year	Fall	Winter	Spring
First Year	Fall First-Year Seminar Chem 101 (with lab) Math 220 World Language	First-Year Writing Seminar Chem 102 (with lab) Math 224 World Language	Bio 215 Chem 103 (with lab) Stat 202 World Language
Second Year	Bio 217 (with lab) Chem 210-1 World Language Elective class	Bio 219 (with lab) Chem 210-2 (with lab) World Language	Bio 308 (with lab) World Language Humanities and Arts Elective class
Third Year	Bio (evolution) Physics 130-1 (with lab) <b>Social and Behavioral (Global Social Inequalities)</b> ● Elective class	Physics 130-2 (with lab) <b>Advanced writing course</b> Social and Behavioral Elective class	Bio (concentration course) Physics 130-3 (with lab) <b>Historical Studies (US Social Inequalities)</b> ● Elective class
Fourth Year	Bio (concentration course) Historical Studies Elective class Elective class	Bio (concentration course) Humanities and Arts Elective class Elective class	Bio (elective) ● <b>Humanities and Arts (Ethics)</b> Elective class Elective class

#### Scenario 2: Econ major (Social Science and Quantitative Reasoning double-count within the major.)

Year	Fall	Winter	Spring
First Year	<b>Fall First-Year Seminar (Global Social Inequalities)</b> ● Econ 201 Math 220 World Language	First-Year Writing Seminar Econ 202 Math 224 World Language	Econ 310-1 Stat 210 World Language Elective class
Second Year	Econ 310-2 World Language Natural Science Elective class	Econ 281 World Language Natural Science Elective class	Econ 311 World Language Historical Studies (also related course for major) Elective class
Third Year	Econ 3XX <b>Advanced writing course</b> Historical Studies (also related course for major) Elective class	Econ 3XX <b>Humanities &amp; Arts (US Social Inequalities)</b> ● Elective class Elective class	Econ 3XX Humanities and Arts Elective class Elective class
Fourth Year	Econ 3XX <b>Humanities and Arts (Ethics)</b> ● Elective class Elective class	Econ 3XX Elective class Elective class Elective class	Econ 3XX Elective class Elective class Elective class

**Scenario 3: English major in Literature** (Arts and Humanities double-count within the major.)

Year	Fall	Winter	Spring
First Year	Fall First-Year Seminar English 210-1 World Language Natural Science	First-Year Writing Seminar English 210-2 World Language Natural Science	English 300 World Language Quantitative Reasoning Social and Behavioral
Second Year	English 2XX World Language Quantitative Reasoning Elective course	English 2XX World Language <b>Social &amp; Behavioral (Global Social Inequalities)</b> Elective course	English 3XX World Language Historical Studies Elective course
Third Year	English 3XX <b>Historical Studies (US Social Inequalities)</b> Elective course Elective course	English 3XX <b>Ethics (via an additional Arts and Humanities course)</b> Elective course Elective course	English 3XX Elective course Elective course Elective course
Fourth Year	English 3XX <b>English 397 (fulfills advanced writing seminar?)</b> Elective course Elective course	English 3XX English 3XX Elective course Elective course	English 3XX Elective course Elective course Elective course

**Scenario 4: English major in Literature also fulfilling pre-med requirements** (Arts and Humanities double-counts within the major; Natural Science and Quantitative Reasoning count towards pre-med required courses.)

Year	Fall	Winter	Spring
First Year	Fall First-Year Seminar Chem 101 (with lab) Math 220 World Language	First-Year Writing Seminar Chem 102 (with lab) Math 224 World Language	Bio 215 Chem 103 (with lab) Stat 202 World Language
Second Year	Bio 217 (with lab) Chem 210-1 World Language English 2XX	Bio 219 (with lab) Chem 210-2 (with lab) World Language	Bio 308 (with lab) Chem 210-3 (with lab) World Language
Third Year	Physics 130-1 (with lab) <b>Social &amp; Behavioral (Ethics)</b> English 210-1 <b>English 2XX (US Social Inequalities)</b>	Physics 130-2 (with lab) Social and Behavioral English 300 English 210-2	Physics 130-3 (with lab) <b>Historical Studies (Global Social Inequalities)</b> English 3XX English 3XX
Fourth Year	Historical Studies English 3XX <b>English 397 (fulfilling advanced writing?)</b> Elective class	English 3XX English 3XX English 3XX Elective class	English 3XX English 3XX Elective class Elective class

## Appendix

### CDR purpose, charge, procedures, and membership

#### *Purpose*

The CDR is appointed by Dean Adrian Randolph to conduct a comprehensive review of the College's curriculum and degree requirements for the purpose of recommending revisions that best serve the needs and interests of our students.

#### *Charge*

- Engage with faculty, students, College leadership, and others to review the College's curriculum and degree requirements.

*The committee may wish to consult with interested parties beyond the Weinberg College community, including faculty, students, and administrators in other Northwestern schools, as well as with alumni. Moreover, the committee may find it useful to examine the curricula and degree requirements at peer-institutions, particularly those that have undergone recent review.*

- Develop a set of learning outcomes that capture the skill-set and mind-set that should characterize a Weinberg College graduate.

*The committee may wish to begin by examining the set of learning outcomes recommended by the [Task Force on the Undergraduate Academic Experience](#).*

- Closely examine the current Weinberg College curriculum and degree requirements, and recommend revisions that address curricular deficiencies or opportunities for strengthening that come to light as requirements are mapped to desired learning outcomes. Particularly close attention should be paid to the general education requirements and to the proposed social inequalities and diversity requirement.
- Submit a report of the committee's findings and recommendations to the dean by the end of winter 2017.

#### *Procedures*

- The committee will report directly to Dean Adrian Randolph.
- While the committee will work independently of the Weinberg College Curriculum Policy Committee (CPC), the committee's recommendations will ultimately be brought before the CPC for consideration and possible submission for a vote by the College faculty.

#### *Structure*

##### Committee composition:

Chair: Associate Dean for Academic Initiatives (Ann Bradlow)

Ex officio: Associate Dean for Undergraduate Academic Affairs (Mary Finn)

Assistant Dean for Curriculum (Joan Linsenmeier)

William Haarlow (Dir, College-Admission Relations; Senior Lecturer, American

Studies)

Members: 9-12 faculty members, plus 2-3 students

Members of the committee will be selected to include:

- all 3 college divisions (natural sciences, social sciences, humanities)
- both tenure-line and teaching-track faculty, including at least one college advisor
- a healthy distribution of diverse backgrounds and perspectives

*Members*

- Sarah Benton, WCAS student
- Ann Bradlow, Professor, Linguistics, WCAS Associate Dean for Academic Initiatives (Chair)
- Laura Brueck, Associate Professor, Asian Languages and Cultures
- Santiago Canez, Assistant Professor of Instruction, Mathematics
- John Alba Cutler, Associate Professor, English
- Sylvester Johnson, Associate Professor, Religious Studies and African American Studies
- Rajeev Kinra, Associate Professor, History
- Christine McCary, College Adviser and Lecturer in Biology
- Rocio Mendez-Rozo, WCAS student
- Reuel Rogers, Associate Professor, Political Science
- Bill Rogerson, Harold and Virginia Anderson Professor of Economics
- Noelle Samia, Associate Professor, Statistics
- Francesca Tataranni, Professor of Instruction, Classics
- David Uttal, Professor, Psychology and School of Education and Social Policy
- Eric Weitz, Professor, Chemistry

*Ex officio members*

- Mary Finn, Associate Dean for Undergraduate Affairs
- Laura Panko, Assistant Dean for Curriculum (Joan Linsenmeier, until her retirement in August 2016)
- William Haarlow, Director, College-Admission Relations, and Senior Lecturer in American Studies

*Staff support:*

- Cindy Pingry, Program Assistant, Undergraduate Studies and Advising Office