Options for Revision of UNR General Education

How to use this document:
This document provides background and alternatives for proposed updates to UNR’s Core (General Education) Curriculum. To help prepare for the upcoming faculty vote on changes to the Core, highlights of the proposed options and their implementation can be reviewed in specific segments of this document, including the context around which the plans are designed (Core Competencies), the proposed Curricula, and the Table of Comparisons that outlines the key issues associated with each proposed approach. Extensive supplementary information is also provided (via appendices and links) to help inform the reader.

The Vote Process:
The UNR faculty body will vote in 2013 to select one of the three alternatives to General Education described herein. To help the voting faculty cast an informed ballot, the vote will take place in two stages. Following a period of campus discussion, the first vote will be to select a finalist from the two new alternatives (Silver or Blue). After additional campus discussion, the winner of this first vote will then be presented as the alternative to the Competency-Aligned Existing Core in a final vote. The winner of the final vote will represent the faculty recommendation to the Provost, who will decide how to proceed with implementing revisions to general education in coming years.

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1. Introduction
Following recent university accreditation and Core Curriculum program reviews, the General Education Task Force (GETF) has spent two years evaluating UNR’s approach to general education and developing new curricular approaches to the Core for faculty to consider.
For background on the research and design processes undertaken by the GETF to this point, please visit the following sites:

- Review of General Education at UNR (see also “Task Force History” navigation bar in left column for other documents)
- 2011-2012 Task Force Report

In Fall 2012, the Provost charged the GETF to review implementation challenges and opportunities implied by three alternative directions that revisions to the Core Curriculum might take (here referred to as the "Competency-Aligned Existing Core," the "Silver Alternative", and the "Blue Alternative"). The GETF has considered how each revision alternative will affect three areas of concern: curriculum, assessment, and resources.

The Provost also charged the GETF to develop this document to assist faculty in the vote that will be conducted to obtain a campus-wide recommendation on a direction for general education: to continue with the existing Core Curriculum, or to adopt one of the new approaches (Silver or Blue) that the campus reviewed in Spring 2012. This guide presents background information and thumbnail sketches of issues and concerns that may arise during implementation of each alternative.

2. Context: Core Competencies

Given the “bird’s-eye view” purposes of this document, the scope of this analysis is necessarily limited and succinct. This document tries to characterize in broad strokes the kinds of changes that faculty members might expect with each direction for revision to the Core Curriculum.

To serve as a basis for projections and comparisons, the May 2012 list of the “Competencies of a UNR Graduate” (hereafter “Core Competencies”), is used as a starting point, as directed by the Provost. These competencies were developed by the GETF after extensive consultation with the campus community in 2011-12.

[Appendix A: Competencies of a UNR Graduate]

Given the imperatives of our accreditation by NWCCU, some version of general education competencies and student learning outcomes (SLOs) associated with them must be implemented in the coming years.

That is, whether the university community votes to continue with the current Core Curriculum or to adopt a new direction for the Core (Silver or Blue), these Competencies will be used to guide refinements to and assessment of the Core Curriculum. Implicit in a decision to continue with the existing Core Curriculum is an understanding that it must be aligned with Core Competencies. A vote to choose one of the other two alternatives is to align the new approach with these same competencies—the curriculum proposals and the competencies were developed together with this in mind.

3. Curricular Designs Studied

No matter what direction the faculty ultimately chooses in the revision of the Core, substantial work must be devoted to aligning the curriculum with the Core Competencies. Future accreditation reviews will necessarily involve designing and implementing accountability measures in the Core Curriculum, which entails using Core Competencies and related measurable outcomes at various key points.

[Appendix B: Curricular Implementation Constraints]
The structure of the existing Core Curriculum and of the Silver and Blue alternative proposals provide points of departure for this analysis, but there really is no way to account for how all the details of implementation will actually unfold. Once we move ahead on the revision path that the Provost chooses after our advisory vote, units around campus will begin designing or redesigning courses for the “revised Core,” and faculty will begin teaching with the Core Competencies and the implied assessment requirements in mind.

Each of the alternative approaches to the Core articulates a means of implementing the Core Competencies. These are described in some detail in the provided appendices, with the new Silver and Blue alternatives framed as originally presented to the campus on 5/25/12. Brief summaries of each alternative will be presented in the next section.

### 4. Curricular Alternatives

The GETF has reviewed a number of the great many ways that institutions of higher education deliver general education. It has considered carefully how to deliver the competencies that faculty at UNR have indicated are crucial to the preparation of a well-educated graduate of our institution. The existing Core Curriculum resulted from a similar process of reflection and curricular design undertaken some decades ago but without the emphasis on developing means of assessing general education that modern practice dictates must be a part of our present re-examination of the Core. To assist faculty in voting on the direction that revision to the Core Curriculum will take, the GETF has developed the following brief comparisons of the three options: 1) continue with the existing structure of the Core Curriculum, which will entail aligning that structure with the Core Competencies and related outcomes; 2) pursue the direction outlined in the Silver Alternative; or 3) pursue the direction outlined in the Blue Alternative.

#### Competency-Aligned Existing Core

The existing “vertically integrated” Core Curriculum emphasizes development of knowledge and skills, introduces a range of perspectives, and builds understanding of cultural and natural environments. This approach builds upon fundamental skills introduced early and enhanced with required sequences that establish prerequisite knowledge in specified disciplines. It also provides experience in a range of disciplinary perspectives, and emphasizes “integration” with a specified humanities sequence, required cross-disciplinary study in “diversity,” and two senior capstones that feature synthesis and application. The key characteristics and advantages of the Competency-Aligned Existing Core are as follows:

- Emphasis on fundamentals, followed by an integrated humanities sequence, and discipline-focused courses.
- Re-designed Core will be familiar and provide opportunities for refinement of a known curriculum.
- Maintains current Core credit requirements.
- Structured mainly around a per-course delivery of competencies: English, mathematics, three Core Humanities courses (in sequence), two natural science courses, and additional preparation in the social sciences and fine arts. Implementation of a redesigned Core will involve revising many classes in the current Core to directly address the newly articulated set of competencies.

[Appendix C: Current Core Curriculum]
Silver Alternative

The Silver Alternative emphasizes “comparative experience with inquiry” in the structure of its curriculum. This approach builds greater program flexibility into delivery of general education with its substantial “Focused Inquiry” component, which allows discipline-specific competencies and related foundational knowledge to be combined in various ways with cross-disciplinary competencies. “Integration” is assumed in these combinations and also explicitly emphasized in a senior capstone experience that requires synthesis and application. The key characteristics and advantages of the Silver Alternative are as follows:

- Designed as a developmental progression from fundamental knowledge, to focused inquiry, and finally integrative experience.
- Flexible option for students and departments providing opportunities for discipline-specific offerings toward the new competencies.
- Reduces Core credit requirements by 6 credits (3 CH and 3 capstone).
- Somewhat less structured, but compatible with the Current Core; existing courses will require modification to address competencies.

[Appendix D: Silver Alternative]

Blue Alternative

The Blue Alternative emphasizes “integration” throughout the structure of its curriculum, with some focus on skills and knowledge specific to disciplines. This approach builds on four kinds of lower-division “Integrative Foundation” courses (with specified cross-disciplinary combinations of competencies to be delivered in each) that introduce disciplinary ways of knowing. Its smaller “Focused Inquiry” component offers some flexibility in delivering discipline-specific competencies and related foundational knowledge. A culminating experience with “Integration” is made available in a senior capstone that requires synthesis and application. The key characteristics and advantages of the Blue Alternative are as follows:

- Prioritizes integrative thinking with a wide range of study at the intersection of fields.
- Provides an opportunity to change the institutional culture of general education at UNR through a series of required interdisciplinary and integrated courses.
- Reduces Core credit requirements by 6 credits (3 CH and 3 capstone) and intends for students to achieve many of the Core competencies in the first two years at UNR.
- More structured than the Current Core, with emphasis placed on five integrative, lower-division classes covering a prescribed set of competencies. These courses will need to be developed.

[Appendix E: Blue Alternative]

5. Assessment

Given UNR’s accreditation imperatives from NWCCU, and the 2009-10 Core Curriculum program review feedback, any revision to the Core Curriculum must include meaningful and useful assessment of general education. Whether the faculty votes to adapt the existing Core or to pursue either the Silver or Blue Alternative, carefully articulated plans will be necessary to structure assessment efforts around competencies and related measurable student learning outcomes (SLOs).

The revision of the Core Curriculum around the Core Competencies offers opportunities for units to play new roles in the Core Curriculum. But with these new opportunities will come necessary accountability to the new Core Competencies.
The following appendices present examination of some constraints that prevail in all three proposed revision scenarios as well as some tentative visions of how assessment might be implemented.

[Appendix F: Assessment Implementation Constraints]

[Appendix G: Draft Assessment Plans for Three Versions of Revised Core]

6. Resources

With implementation of any proposal—Silver, Blue, or a Competency-Aligned Existing Core—some level of increased resources, in both dollars and effort, will follow.

Faculty and administrative energy devoted to initial implementation will likely be greater in the first three years, as new courses are developed, proposed, reviewed, and embedded in the curriculum. Additional energies will be necessary as the assessment plan is initially executed and refined, as transfer course articulation is established, and as the student records system accommodates new requirements. As administration and assessment of the Core become routine, efficiencies should result.

A number of changes and differences in needed resources will be necessary, depending on which direction is chosen. Commentary on these changes is provided via the link below.

[Appendix H: Analysis of Resources Required]

7. Implementation Timeline

Each of the alternatives will require time for the campus to familiarize itself with, and implement its specific approach in a manner that aligns with the expected General Education Competencies. Alignment of the existing Core is estimated to require two years to accomplish. The Silver Alternative is expected to require 2-3 years, and the Blue Alternative is expected to take 3-4 years due to the need to develop new, highly integrative courses.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key Commonalities</th>
<th>Silver</th>
<th>Competency-Aligned Existing Core</th>
<th>Blue</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Competency-Based General Education</td>
<td>Regardless of the alternative that is chosen, the General Education Program will be aligned with the newly-adopted competencies for both course delivery and evaluation.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Complexity of Assessment</td>
<td>Regardless of the alternative that is chosen, assessment of General Education will be mandatory and used for general program improvement as well as campus accreditation. This will apply to existing courses that must be aligned with the General Education Competencies, as well as new courses.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class Size &amp; Availability</td>
<td>Class size and availability may be affected through alignment with competencies, but it is not clear if/how they will be affected differently between alternatives</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vertical alignment, culminating with Capstone Experiences</td>
<td>All alternatives are expected to span both the lower and upper division and culminate with integrative experiences in Capstone courses</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Content: Ethics, Globalization</td>
<td>The newly-adopted General Education Competencies include components that are not explicitly in the current core but will need to be incorporated into any chosen alternative</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Credit Size of the Core (includes 3 credits each of Writing and Math)</td>
<td>30 credits</td>
<td>36 credits</td>
<td>30 credits</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Envisioned Credit Category Breakdown</td>
<td>6 credits fundamentals, 21 credits focused inquiry, 3 credits Integration</td>
<td>6 credits of fundamentals, 18 credits of focused inquiry, 9 credits of integrated humanities, 3 credits of Integration</td>
<td>6 credits fundamentals, 9 credits focused, 15 credits Integration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student Plan of Study</td>
<td>Plan of study will be more individualized (or specified by the student's degree program)</td>
<td>Plan of study will be more individualized (or specified by the student's degree program)</td>
<td>&quot;Integrative Experiences&quot; will result in more courses being specified by the core curriculum/board</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Integration</td>
<td>Integration in Capstone and optionally in other core courses</td>
<td>Integration in Capstone and optionally in other core courses</td>
<td>Integration in Capstone and optionally in other core courses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Curricular Design Flexibility (approach to satisfying competencies)</td>
<td>Competencies are most frequently packaged on a course-by-course basis</td>
<td>Some competencies are combined together in a prescribed manner</td>
<td>Many competencies are combined together in a prescribed manner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Course Selection Options (Number of courses in core)</td>
<td>Greatest selection of courses (compared to Silver and Blue)</td>
<td>Intermediate selection of courses (to address new competencies)</td>
<td>&quot;Integrative Experiences&quot; may result in fewer course selections</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Curricular Changes Needed</td>
<td>Easy adaptation of existing courses</td>
<td>Easy adaptation of existing courses (to address new competencies)</td>
<td>Integrative courses need more complex incorporation into degree programs to minimize overall credit impact</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coordination of responsibility for the Core Curriculum</td>
<td>Least number of required integrated courses will require least centralized coordination</td>
<td>Fewer integrated courses than Blue Plan will require less centralized coordination</td>
<td>15 credits of &quot;Integrative Experiences&quot; will necessitate more centralized coordination</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Development Effort and Resources</td>
<td>Moderate development effort (primarily assessment effort needed)</td>
<td>Moderate development effort (primarily assessment effort needed)</td>
<td>High impact due to the creation of the &quot;Integrative Experiences&quot; in addition to new assessment program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collaborative Teaching</td>
<td>Not essential to the plan</td>
<td>Not essential to the plan</td>
<td>&quot;Integrative Experiences&quot; courses may require collaborative teaching among multiple programs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assessment of Core Program</td>
<td>Assessment will be focused on aligning the Core courses with competencies</td>
<td>Assessment will be focused on aligning the Core courses with competencies</td>
<td>Fewer unique courses may provide more focused assessment opportunities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Articulation agreements with other institutions</td>
<td>Agreements are likely to be similar to those already established, excepting for new courses</td>
<td>Articulation agreements are already established, excepting for new courses</td>
<td>&quot;Integrative Experiences&quot; courses will require additional coordination to develop articulation agreements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Implementation Timeline (Estimated)</td>
<td>2-3 year implementation, building from existing courses, adding new courses, and aligning with competencies</td>
<td>2 year implementation, primarily invoking alignment of existing courses with competencies</td>
<td>3-4 year implementation that will focus on more extensive development of new integrative courses</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

8. Table of Comparisons
Appendices

Appendix A: Competencies of a UNR Graduate*

As a land grant, research institution, the University of Nevada, Reno will offer all of its students an education that prepares them to meet the multiple challenges of the future. This has two discrete components: a broad, general foundation that provides all students with fundamental intellectual skills and knowledge about the world in which they live, and a more advanced, specialized knowledge of a particular discipline, which is offered by the major. The University intends to cultivate student’s intellectual and practical skills, including inquiry and analysis; critical and creative thinking; written and oral communication; quantitative literacy; information literacy; and teamwork and problem solving. General education will promote personal and social responsibility through civic knowledge and engagement; intercultural knowledge and competence; ethical reasoning and action; and foundations and skills for lifelong learning. The University will cultivate student’s knowledge of human cultures and the physical and natural world as well as develop integrative and applied learning skills.

The following competencies describe the general characteristics found in graduates of the University.

Skills: Graduates demonstrate mastery of a range of broadly applicable fundamental skills and methods of inquiry. Additional details for these general skills are provided below to serve as examples that fall under each competency.

A. Communication Skills. Graduates exhibit effective communication skills, ranging from composition of thoughts to discourse for a variety of scholarly and professional purposes.
   - Oral and written discourse
   - Communication of quantitative information
   - Creative expression
   - Critical reading skills

B. Quantitative Skills. Graduates are able to understand and solve problems through the application of mathematics and statistics.
   - Knowledge of mathematical and statistical concepts and methods
   - Interpretation of quantitative information and relationships

C. Methods of Inquiry. Graduates are able to engage in systematic processes for researching problems in a range of content areas.
   - Framing the inquiry process by formulating hypotheses, questions, and problems.
   - Location, retrieval, and critical evaluation of information
   - Selection of appropriate observation, measurement, and evaluation methods

D. Critical and Creative Thinking. Graduates are able to employ appropriate methods and approaches to critically and creatively analyze information in a range of content areas.
   - Knowledge of and ability to select appropriate analysis methods
   - Interpretation of information in both focused and broad contexts
   - Formulating well-founded conclusions

E. Integration, Synthesis, and Application of Knowledge. Graduates are able to solve complex problems, and create new knowledge through a broad application of knowledge and skills.

*These expected General Education Outcomes will be subject to periodic revisions or updates through a mechanism that will be determined at a later date.
• Synthesis of new knowledge by integrating multiple sources of information
• Application of knowledge in both focused and broad interdisciplinary contexts

Knowledge. Graduates possess fundamental content knowledge and understanding of different modes of reasoning and perspectives in a range of focused (Core) subject areas.

F. Arts. Graduates are able to evaluate creative works, compositions, productions or performances in context and demonstrate knowledge of art’s role in shaping culture.
  • Apply techniques of literary and artistic analysis to study and interpret works of art, music, dance or theatre in the context of culture, society or individual identity
  • Engage in creative expression

G. Humanities. Graduates are able to understand the origins, development, and products of their own and other cultures.
  • Recognizing the connection between ideas, values, and cultural products
  • Understanding differing concepts of the relationship between self and society
  • Identifying the origins of present practices in past history
  • Critical reading, analysis, and interpretation of historical and contemporary cultural texts

H. Natural Sciences and Technology. Graduates appropriately employ scientific techniques to examine the natural world and understand the application of science through technology.
  • Familiarity with the foundational theoretical principles of one or more of the physical, biological, or earth sciences.
  • Recognize, search for, collect, organize and evaluate scientific information, methods and findings based on scientific modes of reasoning
  • Understanding of and ability to evaluate science’s role in technological development

I. Social Sciences. Graduates are able to evaluate human perceptions and behaviors and/or social institutions and structures.
  • Employ social science analyses to evaluate characteristics of and relations among/between individuals, communities or societies

J. Diversity. Graduates are able to analyze how people, groups, and cultures differ and how such distinctions position them with respect to societies.
  • Understanding of diversity and equity as social, economic, and political issues

K. Globalization. Graduates are able to recognize and evaluate relationships among cultures and nations across the world.
  • Ability to assess global interconnections and their implications

L. Ethical Reasoning. Graduates are alert to the roles they play in society and have the intellectual tools to make ethical choices.
  • Recognize ethical issues and employ ethical self-awareness
  • Understand and are able to apply and evaluate different ethical perspectives and concepts

M. Constitution. Graduates are familiar with the founding political documents of their society (U.S. and Nevada constitutions).
  • Understand historical origins of state and local government
  • Recognize the influence of constitutional principles on social change
Appendix B: Curricular Implementation Constraints

The GETF anticipates that the following considerations must be addressed no matter what direction the revisions to the Core Curriculum will take:

- As the revision process begins, all courses must be either reviewed (in case of existing courses) or proposed (in case of new courses) and approved to deliver Core credit and thereby satisfy Core requirements. Periodic reviews, taking into account assessment data, must be conducted to assure continuing alignment and effective delivery of Core Competencies and related SLOs; these reviews must establish whether a given course should continue to receive Core credit. No course should be considered a permanent feature of the Core Curriculum absent evidence that it continues to deliver preparation in the Core Competencies and related SLOs it was approved to deliver.

- There are some Core Competencies that seem more discipline-focused (i.e., require field or discipline expertise for determining appropriate student performance indicators, what foundational knowledge and inquiry methods are required, how to collect appropriate evidence for evaluation in assessment). Other competencies seem more cross-disciplinary. For example, “critical and creative thinking” will have diverse manifestations, expectations about student performance, and evidence that the competency has been demonstrated. In the case of the discipline-focused competencies, the Core Board will need to facilitate oversight of how a competency is demonstrated. For example, Chemistry will desire to have input on how a proposed Fine Arts course might deliver the “Natural Sciences and Technology” competency; conversely, Fine Arts will expect to have input on how a proposed Chemistry course might deliver on an “Arts” competency. In the case of the cross-disciplinary competencies, the Core Board will need to facilitate cross-disciplinary discussion of how competencies like “critical and creative thinking” or “diversity” are delivered.

- The Core Board and Director must develop a set of standards for evaluating whether and how well a course design implements a particular competency or set of related student learning outcomes. To assure equity of consideration for all units who might propose a revised or new course design for inclusion in the Core Curriculum, there will need to be clear quantitative and/or qualitative criteria (articulated as concretely as possible) for what kinds of student performance demonstrate a given competency. These standards will need to be revised periodically, with disciplinary-area experience and expertise sought at multiple points in the processes of developing Core Competency standards. But there must be some central authority for making decisions about Core status and transparency about how decisions are made concerning inclusion of courses in the Core Curriculum.

- Given the shift to use of the Core Competencies, and the increasing need for central coordination of course review and assessment, the structure and processes of the Core Board must be made more straightforward and transparent. The Provost and the Faculty Senate may want to consider whether development and campus-wide communication of formalized working rules or “bylaws” for the Core Board is in order.
Appendix C: Current Core Curriculum

The University's Core Curriculum is the foundational education that students must fulfill as part of any undergraduate degree program at the University of Nevada, Reno. The Goals of the Core Curriculum are: 1) To provide students with a valuable education, which will enrich any major, and 2) To broaden students' horizons by exposing them to a variety of subjects and disciplines. At present, the Core is described as follows. Note that implementation of the Current Core will require alignment with the new General Education Competencies.

Core Curriculum Learning Objectives
A student successfully completing the Core Curriculum at UNR will be able to

1. Compose and Communicate effectively in a range of media for a variety of rhetorical and creative purposes;
2. Demonstrate an ability to frame and analyze a problem, find and interpret relevant information, develop and evaluate possible solutions, come to well-grounded conclusions, and craft an appropriate argument, report, application, or other expression of such inquiry;
3. Understand and apply the knowledge, perspectives, principles, and modes of reasoning employed in the fine arts, humanities, social sciences, natural sciences, and mathematics;
4. Understand how the knowledge, perspectives, principles, and modes of reasoning employed in the fine arts, humanities, social sciences, natural sciences, and mathematics have contributed to human achievement;
5. Develop habits of mind that foster integrative thinking and the ability to transfer knowledge and skills from one setting to another;
6. Demonstrate an understanding of the concepts of culture and cultural difference, and develop the habits of mind that allow for intercultural understanding and responsible individual and social choices for citizens of the global community.

Guidelines, Goals and Learning Outcomes for Core Curriculum Areas

English
Students will learn to:

1. Compose and Communicate effectively in a range of media for a variety of rhetorical and creative purposes; and,
2. Demonstrate an ability to frame and analyze a problem, find and interpret relevant information, develop and evaluate possible solutions, come to well-grounded conclusions, and craft an appropriate argument, report, application, or other expression of such inquiry.

Mathematics
Please see the online description of student learning outcomes for the current Core mathematics classes.

[View Document on Web]

Natural Sciences
Guidelines for Core natural science courses:

• Courses should assist students in gaining a practical understanding of the scientific method and applying it in at least four substantial lab experiences in each Core science course.
• Through lab experience, the student will learn how to gather and analyze data, draw conclusions and make inferences.
• Each course includes current as well as classical topics in science and technology.
• Courses require critical review of scientific literature outside the textbook, such as articles from Journals and other current periodicals in the field.
• Courses stress the continued development of quantitative skills by requiring students to apply skills taught in Core mathematics courses.

**Social Sciences**

**General Objective**

Core social science courses provide students with tools for analyzing human actions, enabling them to understand and apply a scientific approach to the study of contemporary individual and social issues, problems, and their own lives. As part of the University Core, social science courses foster critical understanding of human action and interaction with other humans and their environment.

**Specific Objectives**

• Expose students to current events, issues, and literature relevant to the particular social science discipline.
• Develop critical thinking and writing skills.
• Apply the scientific method and body of theories to analyze human actions.

**Fine Arts**

Core fine arts courses are designed to:

• Enable students to discern the ways in which the arts function as a means to explore, affirm, or celebrate individual or group identity.
• Provide insights into the history, diversity, and creativity of the world’s cultures.
• Develop writing and verbal skills for critical explorations into the drive for all individuals and cultures to understand and express identity through dance, music, theatre, or visual media.
• Structure outlets for students to engage in creative expression.
• Encourage cross-cultural understanding and interaction.

**Core Humanities**

Core Humanities courses have two important goals:

• As the introductory humanities Core courses, they provide students the experience of working with the basic tools of the humanities disciplines: clear writing, close reading of primary texts, practice with oral expression of serious ideas, awareness of modes of discourse, sensitivity to cultural differences, understanding and evaluating the past, and reflecting upon the cultural implications of arts, technologies, and scientific discoveries.
• As interdisciplinary courses in the traditions of the West, they expose students to the cultural diversity that finds expression in the modern West, and they also make students aware of the great diversity of sources from which our cultural legacies derive and show the richness of the historical debate over the ideas that continue to shape us as Americans.

**Capstone Courses**

Capstone courses should meet the following GUIDELINES:

• Courses build upon the Core Curriculum. They provide the opportunity for students to bring to bear knowledge gained in other Core courses and knowledge derived from courses in the major.
• Courses are integrative, broadly focused, multi-disciplinary, and if relevant, cross-cultural.
• Courses focus on ethical and substantive issues and themes that affect the world community and broad cross-sections of humanity.
• Courses promote critical thinking, reaching beyond orthodox or traditional approaches and perspectives. Courses challenge students to question and critically examine established assumptions.
• Every course includes a rigorous writing component and also, wherever possible, a computational component.
• Capstone courses offer a unique opportunity for innovative teaching. Cross-disciplinary courses and team-taught courses are encouraged.

GENERAL/MAJOR Capstone Course Distinction:
• A General Capstone course has only lower-division Core Curriculum courses as prerequisites.
• A Major Capstone course may have prerequisites in the major, in addition to the lower-division Core Curriculum prerequisites.

Diversity
There are three criteria that a course must meet in order to count as a diversity course:
• The course must have as its central focus or theme (not as a peripheral interest) a topic pertaining to non-western culture or to excluded groups within western culture.
• The course must have a rigorous writing requirement.
• The course must be on the 200-level or above.

Core Curriculum Structure and Requirements
The Core is designed to be both horizontal and vertical, with curricular experiences that span the freshman to senior years. The requirements are listed in the General Catalog and span the above-listed disciplinary areas.

[View Document on Web]
Appendix D: Silver Alternative

In their general education, students will be expected to develop fundamental intellectual practices and habits of mind that cut across numerous courses and prepare them for their majors (Goal I). Thinking critically requires all students to understand multiple systems of producing and valuing knowledge and expression; therefore, they will be provided broad comparative experiences regardless of the particular major in which they develop advanced skills (Goal II). The last component ideally occurs at the senior level (Goal III), as students are completing their majors in a capstone course. The capstone experience demonstrates the effective deployment of skills acquired in earlier general education components (Goals I & II) as well as in their major.

Each of the 14 separate outcomes of the Silver Plan (below) will typically be incorporated into multiple courses throughout the general education curriculum. However, it is envisioned that no more than three of the outcomes should be met in any individual course. Additionally, it is also envisioned that courses used for satisfying degree program requirements (such as major courses) may also be used to address these general education outcomes, with approval from the UNR Core Board. Implementation of this alternative would require 30 credits.

Goal I: Fundamental Practice
Students learn a wide range of fundamental skills that are broadly applicable in many disciplines including effective communication in a variety of media, quantitative reasoning and analytical skills, and the ability to collect, organize and evaluate data and information. These foundations are reinforced throughout the general education curriculum. Letters in parentheses (A) represent competencies gained through the general education and listed in the document “Competencies of a UNR Graduate.”

Outcome 1: Effective Composition and Communication. Students will be able to compose written, oral, visual, and other forms of discourse for a variety of scholarly, professional, and creative purposes. (A)

Outcome 2: Quantitative Reasoning. Students will be able to apply quantitative reasoning and statistical analysis methodologies to understand and solve problems. (B)

Outcome 3: Critical Analysis and Use of Information. Students will be critical consumers of information, able to engage in systematic research processes, frame questions, read critically, and apply observational and experimental approaches to obtain information. These skills will include the ability to 1) employ systematic methods to search for, collect, organize, and evaluate information, 2) to critically evaluate the methods, context, findings or arguments that produced that information, and 3) formulate conclusions based on their own analysis of the information. (C, D)

**Implementation: 6 credits**

Courses that fall underneath Goal I will concentrate on Outcomes 1-3.

| Writing: | Introduced with 3 credits of English 102 in the first year, then reinforced throughout the curriculum. Prerequisites may be required. |
| Math:    | Introduced with an approved 3 credit lower division mathematics or statistics course in the first year, then reinforced throughout the curriculum. Prerequisites may be required. |

Goal II: Focused Inquiry
Students learn about the processes and methods of inquiry, examining the principles underlying the making or discovery of knowledge, how those principles were developed, and how they are applied. Students learn to evaluate the soundness of arguments and appreciate how current ideas might change in
response to new evidence. Students will engage in modes of analysis, attentive to considerations of constitutional principles, the role of science in society, ethics, diversity and equity, or globalization.

Outcome 4: **Physical and Natural Phenomena.** Students will be able to explain the processes by which the natural and physical worlds are investigated; articulate basic principles used to explain natural phenomena; and apply the scientific process to real problems using observational or experimental methods. *(B, C, D, H)*

Outcome 5: **History and Culture.** Students will be able to understand the processes by which past and present societies have been created and perpetuated through their history, ideas, and cultural products. Students will engage both historical and contemporary cultural texts through critical reading, analysis, and interpretation in the context of culture, society, and individual identity. *(G, A, C, D)*

Outcome 6: **Cultures, Societies, and Individuals.** Students will analyze social/human conditions by systematically studying individuals, groups, communities, and cultures. Students will interpret, model, observe, or experiment, as means of inquiring into human problems. *(C, D, B, I, J, K)*

Outcome 7: **Artistic Composition, Interpretation, and Expression.** Students will apply techniques of critical analysis to study and interpret works of art, dance, music, and theater in the context of culture, society, and individual identity. Students also may cast their interpretation in the form of creative expression. *(F, A, D)*

Outcome 8: **Constitution.** Students will become familiar with essential elements of the constitutions of the United States and Nevada, including historical origin and development, and application of constitutional principles in society. *(M, A, L)*

Outcome 9: **Science, Technology and Society.** Students will be able to connect science and technology to real-world problems by analyzing scientific data related to a problem of societal concern; be able to discriminate between sound and unsound interpretation of data; employ cogent reasoning methods in their own examinations of problems and issues; and evaluate the applications of science and technology in societal contexts. *(H, B, C, D, L)*

Outcome 10: **Diversity and Equity.** Students will develop a set of cognitive, affective, and behavioral skills and characteristics that support effective and appropriate interaction in a variety of contexts. Students will engage in modes of analysis attentive to considerations of diversity and equity. *(J, A, C, D, E)*

Outcome 11: **Global Contexts.** Students will apply modes of academic inquiry, creative expression, or results of research to problems in historical and contemporary global contexts. Students will understand the connections among local, national, and international contexts, and evaluate the ways that historical and contemporary global influences affect their current local situations. *(K, A, C, D, E)*

Outcome 12: **Ethics.** Students will evaluate the ethical principles in application of specialized knowledge, results of research, creative expression, or design processes. Students will demonstrate an ability to assess their own ethical values and the social context of problems, recognize ethical issues in a variety of settings, consider how ethical principles might be applied to ethical dilemmas and consider the ramifications of various actions. *(L, A, D, E)*

**Implementation:** 21 credits

Courses taken to meet these requirements may be taken at any level, and are selected from a list approved by the Core Board. Courses that fall underneath Goal II will concentrate on Outcomes 4-12 and reinforce Outcomes 1-3.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sciences &amp; Technology:</th>
<th>6 credits in the natural sciences, engineering, or related topics. Courses should cover both scientific principles and their application. A minimum of 1 credit hour of laboratory experiences must be included in the 6 credits.</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Humanities:</td>
<td>6 credits in the humanities. Courses should cover both fundamental knowledge and its application.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Sciences:</td>
<td>3 credits in human or social sciences. Courses should cover both fundamental knowledge and its application.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fine Arts:</td>
<td>3 credits in one or more of the arts (art, dance, music, or theater). Courses should cover fundamental knowledge of history, critical interpretation, and/or creative expression.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Enhancement:</td>
<td>The remaining 3 “enhancement” credits are intended to be selected by the student to help assure coverage of Outcomes 8-12, which may be interdisciplinary in nature. To meet Outcomes 8-12, a course must contain substantial content in the respective area and have been approved as meeting that outcome by the Core Board.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Goal III: Integrative Experience**

Students learn to apply their knowledge and fundamental skills through intense engagement of a problem. These experiences consist of cross-disciplinary approaches to a subject that draw upon ideas and practices introduced through general education and refined in major and minor preparation (Goals I and II).

Outcome 13: **Integration & Synthesis.** Students will be able to synthesize and transfer learning to new complex situations. *(E, A, C, D)*

Outcome 14: **Application.** Students will be able to apply knowledge in both focused and broad interdisciplinary contexts. *(E – L)*

**Implementation: 3 credits**

Courses that fall underneath Goal III will concentrate on Outcomes 13-14 and reinforce Outcomes 4-12.

**Integrative Capstone:** The capstone course should be taken only after the student has taken all of the other general education requirements, and be of junior or senior standing.
Appendix E: Blue Alternative

In their general education, student learning is organized around three overarching goals intended to develop a suite of intellectual practices and cultivate modes of reasoning that cut across disciplinary boundaries. These goals – Fundamental Practice, Integrated Experience, and Focused Inquiry – each involve enhancing critical thinking abilities. In Fundamental Practice (Goal I), students develop practices and skills that are broadly applicable in many disciplines, including effective communication in a variety of media, and quantitative and analytical reasoning skills. Integrative Experience (Goal II) follows Fundamental Practice, providing breadth along with integration outside conventional disciplinary boundaries. Integrative Experience, both at lower and upper division, enhances students’ ability to synthesize, encourages the transfer of learning to new complex situations, and develops communication skills. Focused Inquiry (Goal III) provides a measure of depth as students learn about, and put into practice, processes and methods of inquiry by examining principles underlying knowledge creation and use. It is envisioned that courses used for satisfying degree program requirements (such as major courses) may also be used to address these general education outcomes, with approval from the UNR Core Board. Implementation of this alternative would require 30 credits.

GOAL 1: Fundamental Practice
Fundamental Practice is designed to develop and enhance practices in fundamentals which students will use during their studies at the university and throughout their personal and professional lives. Letters in parentheses (A) represent competencies gained through the general education and listed in the document “Competencies of a UNR Graduate.”

Outcome 1: Writing. Students are able to use written forms of discourse for a variety of scholarly, professional, and creative purposes. As part of this, they will explore academic genres with particular attention to interpretation and argument. (A)

Outcome 2: Mathematics. Students are able to apply quantitative reasoning and statistical analysis methods to understand and solve problems. As part of this they will solve quantitative problems using computational strategies; apply college-level mathematical techniques to real world situations; and interpret data and draw inferences from mathematical representations. (B)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Implementation</th>
<th>6 credits</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Writing:</td>
<td>Introduced in the freshman year with a minimum of 3 credits of ENG 102 or other approved Writing course (and, as necessary, preceded by ENG 101 or other writing prerequisites). Reinforced throughout the Core Curriculum.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mathematics:</td>
<td>Introduced in the freshman year with a minimum of 3 credits from a list of approved Mathematics or Statistics courses. Reinforced throughout the Core Curriculum.</td>
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</table>

GOAL II: Integrative Experience
Integrative Experience is designed to develop an integrative foundation upon which students build to become a generally well-educated person. Students learn to apply their knowledge and fundamental skills through intense engagement of a problem. These experiences involve cross-disciplinary approaches in ways that draw upon ideas and practices introduced throughout general education and are refined in studies in their major and minor. Each of these outcomes is aimed at enhancing students’ ability to synthesize and transfer learning to new, complex situations as well as developing a suite of communications skills.
Outcome 3: **Natural Sciences & Quantitative Reasoning.** Students evaluate the evolution of fundamental principles in one or more scientific areas as they learn about scientific techniques to explore the natural world. Students are able to critically analyze quantitative information or apply statistical analysis to form reasoned conclusions based on such information. Students are able to explain societal, philosophical or technological implications of natural science knowledge or quantitative reasoning. Communication skills develop through studying the representation of data and use of graphical or spatial forms. (B, C, D, E, H)

Outcome 4: **Social Sciences & Globalization.** Students are able to engage in social science analysis with respect to evaluating perceptions, behaviors, institutions, and/or social structures among/between individuals, communities and/or societies. Students evaluate global interconnections and their implications. Communication skills develop through evaluating information from digital sources. (A, C, D, E, I, K)

Outcome 5: **Humanities & Ethics.** Students are able to interpret historical and contemporary texts and creative products in context. Students develop an understanding of how the past has given rise to the present through critically analyzing cultural texts of all kinds and developing interpretive syntheses. Students are able to recognize and evaluate ways that ethical standards have evolved over time and vary across cultures. Communications skills develop through critical reading of historical and/or contemporary texts and through analytic writing. (A, D, E, G, I)

Outcome 6: **Diversity & Constitutional Analysis.** Students are able to analyze how people, groups, and cultures interact and differ and explain how these interactions and differences position them with respect to cultural, economic or political institutions and social structures. Students are able to examine the philosophical, political, social, and institutional implications reflected in the US and Nevada constitutions so as to promote deeper knowledge of, debate about, and practice of democracy. Communications skills develop through critical reading of historic or contemporary texts and evaluating information from digital sources. (A, C, D, E, I, K)

Outcome 7: **Capstone.** Students are able to apply specialized modes of reasoning, knowledge or creative processes in multi-disciplinary and/or cross-cultural settings. Learning is designed to cultivate comprehensive exploration of issues, ideas, artifacts, evidence, and/or events before students accept or formulate opinions or conclusions. Students are able to grasp new understandings about ethical or substantive issues and themes that influence the world or broad cross-sections of humanity. Communication skills develop through critical reading, writing, and oral communications (A-L)

<table>
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<tr>
<td>Natural Science &amp; Quantitative Reasoning:</td>
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<td>Social Science &amp; Globalization:</td>
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<td>Humanities &amp; Ethics:</td>
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<tr>
<td>Diversity &amp; Constitutional Analysis:</td>
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<tr>
<td>Capstone:</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**GOAL III: Focused Inquiry**  
Focused Inquiry is designed to enhance students’ ability to critically think in a particular area of knowledge. Students will learn about processes and methods of inquiry, examining principles underlying the making or discovery of knowledge, how those principles developed, and their applications. Analytical techniques and methodologies are employed to illuminate specific topics. Students also learn to evaluate the soundness of argument and appreciate how change happens in response to new ideas, theories, and evidence.

Outcome 8: **Arts.** Students identify, evaluate, and interpret creative techniques, design principles, and media in various disciplines and genres and/or engage in creative expression at the college level (in art, dance, music or theatre). *(D, F)*

Outcome 9: **Sciences and Technology.** Students examine and apply scientific fundamental principles underlying a body of scientific knowledge or technological development and are able to explain how such principles were developed. As part of this they will gather and analyze data, draw conclusions, and make inferences. *(B, C, H)*

Outcome 10: **Humanities.** Students evaluate the values, practices, ideas, and/or achievements that characterize (as well as those that differentiate) selected cultures, including tracing sources and development of modern intellectual traditions and cultural institutions. *(C, D, G)*

**Implementation:** 9 credits  
Courses taken to meet these requirements may be taken at any level (lower or upper division). Courses should be selected that best position students in their majors and minors.

**Arts:** A minimum of 3 credits from a list of approved Art courses that focus on history, criticism, or performance in the fine arts.

**Natural Science & Technology:** A minimum of 3 credits from a list of approved Natural Science & Technology courses. Each course must incorporate a minimum of 1 credit of laboratory experiences.

**Humanities:** A minimum of 3 credits from a list of approved Humanities courses that examine a body of knowledge in the humanities and how it developed.
Appendix F: Assessment Implementation Constraints

Beyond the specific constraints imposed by each of the alternatives (Competency-Aligned Existing Core, Silver Alternative, and Blue Alternative), there are some considerations that prevail in all options:

- All courses must be either reviewed (in case of existing courses) or proposed (in case of new courses) and approved to deliver Core credit and satisfy Core requirements. In either case, the process must identify and articulate SLOs that relate to the Core Competencies, and must be accompanied by an assessment plan that describes what measurable or observable performances of the competency will be available for collection and analysis in Core Assessment efforts. Fortunately, most units have begun assessment efforts focused on degree programs: there is growing assessment expertise across the disciplines, and no reason that assessment of general education cannot build upon that expertise, and even link to, build from, and provide foundational “prerequisite knowledge” information for those major-program-focused assessment projects.

- In the absence of a University Assessment Office, the Core Board will need to have greater centralized development, coordination, and compliance functions for assessment. The Core Board will need to articulate and implement structured processes for facilitating the development of assessment plans, for conducting of assessment projects, and for reporting of assessment project results on a regular, routine basis.

- Given all the continuing and new functions of the Core Curriculum, a Core Assessment officer will be the most efficient and effective means of consulting with units about development of meaningful, useful assessment projects and assuring that the Core Board has regular reports of results from assessment activity.

- While many or most Core assessment projects will be coordinated at the college level and information about student performance collected at the department level, the Core Board will need to assure that assessment efforts are substantial, authentic, valid, not redundant, and timely.

- There are some Core Competencies that seem more discipline-focused (i.e., require field or discipline expertise for determining appropriate student performance indicators, what foundational knowledge and inquiry methods are required, and how to collect appropriate evidence for evaluation in assessment projects). Other competencies seem more cross-disciplinary. For example, “critical and creative thinking” will have diverse manifestations, expectations about student performance, and evidence that the competency has been demonstrated. In the case of the discipline-focused competencies, the Core Board will need to facilitate oversight of how a competency is demonstrated. For example, Chemistry will desire to have input on how a proposed Fine Arts course might deliver the “Natural Sciences and Technology” competency; conversely, Fine Arts will expect to have input on how a proposed Chemistry course might deliver an “Arts” competency. In the case of the cross-disciplinary competencies, the Core Board will need to facilitate cross-disciplinary discussion of how competencies like “critical and creative thinking” or “diversity” are delivered.

- In the existing Core Curriculum—because of its “per course” delivery system—and in some aspects of the Silver and the Blue alternatives, the delivery of outcomes is at present underspecified. In order to assure equity in consideration of proposed new courses, these are the areas where the need will be greatest to have assessment accountability. This should be built around the student performance indicators for a particular outcome, with carefully articulated criteria for evaluating and approving course syllabi. Clear, concrete examples will be helpful for such evaluation. For example, illustrations of what constitutes a “rigorous writing component” or an “ethics” component should be provided.
Appendix G: Draft Assessment Plans for Three Versions of Revised Core

Design Assumptions

All three presented alternatives assume that assessment will be structured around the new Core Competencies (see notes below in each alternative, keyed to the A-M list). In the case of the Silver and Blue alternatives, the competencies are tracked via the outcomes that articulate measurable student performance of the program-level competency in question. In the case of the existing Core Curriculum, we have tried to locate points where reasonable assumptions can be made that a particular competency will be introduced or reinforced in existing courses.

To assure adequate opportunities for coverage of the competencies over the course of the number of credits allotted in each of the alternatives, and to keep these design processes manageable for the moment, these assessment plans assume that each course will deliver two or three competencies each. We assume that the Core Board, faculty curriculum committees, and those administrators charged with implementing the Core structured around the new Core Competencies might develop other distributions; the range assumed in this document is intended only to focus discussion.

These assessment plans assume that assessment will occur relatively continuously, on a seven-year cycle to align with the new accreditation processes. The length of the cycle is arbitrary but is intended to distribute the effort efficiently and equitably.

Each project in the Core assessment cycle need not be “comprehensive,” but might focus on one kind of student performance that demonstrates a level of proficiency in a particular SLO that falls under a given Core Competency. Many or most of these projects will be coordinated at the college level and conducted at the department level. If we view assessment as a systematic and cumulative process, a portrait of how a competency is developed over the course of the whole program will be gathered over some years. Periodically, it will be helpful to conduct a more comprehensive assessment of (for example), communication or quantitative reasoning or critical thinking across the whole general education program. Similarly, an assessment may focus intensively on a particular disciplinary area where both “knowledge” and “intellectual practices” are delivered (for example, the natural sciences) to ascertain how well these are working together.

Anticipated Infrastructure Considerations

- Necessary resources must be made available to ensure that insightful and appropriate assessment is completed across all competencies. Given all the continuing and new functions of the Core Curriculum, a Core Assessment officer will be the most efficient and effective means of consulting with units about development of meaningful, useful assessment projects and assuring that the Core Board has regular reports of results from assessment activity.
- Each program will identify an assessment team from among its faculty, of a size appropriate to the assessment workload. These may be yearly, biannual, or tri-annual teams. The assessment of a program should not fall to only one person.
- Release time should be available for every assessment team member, appropriate to the size of the team, the assessment challenges, and the resources available.
- Junior faculty should not be asked to take on the role of lead or only program assessor.

Draft Assessment Plans

Rough outlines of assessment plans for the Competency-Aligned Existing Core, the Silver alternative, and the Blue alternative are presented below. Each assessment plan (a seven-year cyclical schedule) includes information about the credit structure of the curriculum and an outline of the areas where it is anticipated that competencies might arise, titled “Anticipated Competency Distribution.”
The “Anticipated Competency Distribution” charts use Xs to denote the logical “obvious” connections that faculty have traditionally come to expect between disciplinary areas and delivery of competencies/outcomes. The ▲s denote “likely” connections that reasonably might be made, but are not explicitly specified at present.

The existing Core Curriculum was built on a per-course delivery system. This means that the “delivery by competencies/outcomes” model is necessarily the least specified with regard to where Core Competencies might arise in this familiar existing structure. As we have done elsewhere in this voting information document, we have attempted to map the Core Competencies onto the existing structure in full knowledge that we are applying definitions of the competencies that may change in the actual implementation process.

**Additional Methodological Considerations**

- Communication and quantitative reasoning skill permeate the Core curriculum; any courses where these competencies are delivered will provide important opportunities for the assessment of growth/development over the duration of the Core.

- Capstones are the courses that most if not all programs include. As the culmination of the Core, they should also demonstrate the accumulated learning of students who have completed most of their Core courses. There should be a variety of Capstone assessments focused specifically on outcomes related to writing, math, integration, and focused inquiry. The timing of the capstone assessment is also important because it provides culminating data that is fresh for the accreditation work in year seven.

- In each assessment year, a range of courses that are focused on specific competencies will be assessed on the basis of a selection made at the institutional level but negotiated with individual departments and programs. The idea is to generate a comprehensive plan that produces assessments that are meaningful and relevant to the programs conducting and using those assessments. In short, the institutional assessment planning may be broad while the programmatic planning will focus on specific competencies, methods, and scope.

**Competency-Aligned Existing Core: Draft Assessment Plan**

- Mathematics (3 – 6 credits)
- Writing (3 – 6 credits)
- Natural Science (6 credits, 3 from A list, 3 from B list)
- Core Humanities (9 credits)
- Social Sciences (3 credits)
- Fine Arts (3 credits)
- Diversity (3 credits)
- Capstone (6 credits, at least one course outside major)
## Competency-Aligned Existing Core
### Anticipated Competency Distribution

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### Notes:
- This table represents a reasonable anticipation of how the current Core would be formally aligned with the expected competencies. The Xs denote “obvious” connections we have traditionally come to expect between disciplinary areas and delivery of competencies/outcomes. The ▲s denote “likely” connections that reasonably might be made.
## Competency-Aligned Existing Core Assessment Schedule

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assessment Cycle Year</th>
<th>Skills</th>
<th>Knowledge</th>
<th>Cross-disciplinary, critical-thinking</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Year One</strong></td>
<td>Competency A (Communication Skills)</td>
<td>Competency B, C, D, H (Nat Sci &amp; Tech)</td>
<td>Competency C, D, E, H (Methods of Inquiry, Critical and Creative Thinking, Integration, Synthesis, and Application of Knowledge, Humanities)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Year Two</strong></td>
<td>Competency B, E (Quantitative Skills)</td>
<td>Competency G (Humanities)</td>
<td>Competency M (Constitution)</td>
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<td>Competency L (Ethics)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Year Three</strong></td>
<td>Competency A, D, E (Mid-program written, verbal, visual communication, methods of inquiry)</td>
<td>Competency C, I (Social Sciences)</td>
<td>Competency A, D, J, K (Diversity)</td>
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<td><strong>Year Four</strong></td>
<td>Competency B, D, E (Mid-program Quantitative Skills, Critical and Creative Thinking, Integration, Synthesis, and Application of Knowledge)</td>
<td>Competency D, F, J, K (Arts)</td>
<td>Competency A, J, K (Diversity and Equity)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Year Five</strong></td>
<td>Focus on Integration and cross-disciplinary, critical thinking, via focus on Capstones. A – E (as appropriate for disciplines)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Year Six</strong></td>
<td>Focus on assessments of Core courses within departments or programs, according to proposals from these units.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Year Seven</strong></td>
<td>Focus on institutional review, college/division assessment needs, and/or finish up other assessments within departments or programs</td>
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</tbody>
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### Silver Alternative: Draft Assessment Plan

- **Two "Fundamental Practices" (6 credits):**
  - Mathematics
  - Writing
- **Five "Focused Inquiry" (21 credits):**
  - Sciences & Technology
  - Humanities
  - Social Sciences
  - Fine Arts
  - “Enhancement”
- **Integrative Experience (3 credits):**
  - Capstone
### Silver Alternative
### Anticipated Competency Distribution

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### Notes:

- The “Focused Inquiry” section contains a lot of credits, and a lot of competencies/outcomes to be delivered on the chart above by the Xs for what seem to be “obvious” connections we have traditionally come to expect between disciplinary areas and delivery of competencies/outcomes. The ▲s denote “likely” connections that might be made, but these traditional expectations (or likelihoods) are not specified at present in the Silver Alternative.

- This “relatively unspecified delivery of outcomes” aspect of the Silver Alternative is where the greatest opportunity for new course development and design lies. In order to assure equity in consideration of proposed new courses, it is also the area where the need will be greatest to have assessment accountability built around the student performance indicators for a particular outcome, with carefully articulated criteria for evaluating and approving course syllabi, approaches, etc. Some kind of fairly concrete examples will be helpful for such evaluation (i.e., in terms of the existing Core Curriculum, what is a “rigorous writing component”?)

- The capstones are one place where many of the competencies might be assessed, with the possible exception of the “constitution requirement.” Traditionally, capstones have been writing-intensive and assume critical thinking, synthesis, etc. With the new emphasis on competencies, there would seem to be an opportunity to collect and evaluate performances of high-level quantitative reasoning, but this is not specified in the Silver Alternative as currently articulated.
Silver Alternative Assessment Schedule

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assessment Cycle Year</th>
<th>Fundamental Practice</th>
<th>Focused Inquiry (Discipline-centered, knowledge and inquiry)</th>
<th>Focused Inquiry (Cross-disciplinary, critical-thinking)</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Year One</td>
<td>Outcome 1 (Core Writing) A</td>
<td>Outcome 4 (Phys/Nat) H, C, B</td>
<td>Outcome 9 (Sci/Tech/Soc) H, D, B or A</td>
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<tr>
<td>Year Two</td>
<td>Outcome 2 (Core Math) B</td>
<td>Outcome 5 (History/Cultures) G,C</td>
<td>Outcome 8 (Constitution) Outcome 12 (Ethics) M, D, L, A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year Three</td>
<td>Outcome 1(mid-program written, verbal, visual communication) A</td>
<td>Outcome 6 (Cultures, Societies, Individuals) I, C</td>
<td>Outcome 11 (Global Contexts) K, D, A</td>
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<tr>
<td>Year Four</td>
<td>Outcome 2 (Mid-program quantitative reasoning, application) B</td>
<td>Outcome 7 (Artistic Composition and Expression) F, C, D</td>
<td>Outcome 10 (Diversity and Equity) J, D, A</td>
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<tr>
<td>Year Five</td>
<td>Focus on “Integration” Outcomes 13, 14, via focus on Capstones. A, E (also B-D)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Year Six</td>
<td>Focus on assessments of Core courses within departments or programs, according to proposals from these units.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Year Seven</td>
<td>Focus on institutional review, college/division assessment needs, and/or finish up other assessments within departments or programs</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Blue Alternative: Draft Assessment Plan

Two "Fundamental Practices": Mathematics
Writing

Five “Integrative Experiences”: Natural Science & Quantitative Reasoning
Social Science & Globalization
Humanities & Ethics
Diversity & Constitutional Analysis
Capstone

Three “Focused Inquiry”: Arts
Natural Science & Technology
Humanities
### Blue Alternative

#### Anticipated Competency Distribution

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**Notes:**

1. The Blue Alternative offers that writing will be "reinforced throughout the Core Curriculum." However, writing/communication skills are not specifically included within Focused Inquiry or Natural Sciences courses in the Blue Alternative as it is presently articulated. For writing/communication skills to be a focus and assessed "throughout the Core Curriculum," courses from among these areas must include assessable work in writing/communication skills. The chart above denotes this with ▲ s to indicate "likelihood" that communication competencies will arise and present assessment opportunities.

2. The Constitution competency is not mentioned specifically anywhere in the present version of the Blue Alternative curriculum, though it is probably intended to be included within the Diversity and Constitutional Analysis courses, as the title for this category of courses indicates. The chart above denotes this with ▲ ▲ to indicate "likelihood" that communication competencies will arise and present assessment opportunities.
3. The Arts are included only in the Capstone and Arts Focused Inquiry courses; they are absent from the Fundamental Practice courses, as well as most of the Integrative Inquiry and Focused Inquiry courses.

4. Focused Inquiry courses exclude more than half (54%) of the UNR Graduate Competencies.

### Blue Alternative Assessment Schedule

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assessment Cycle Year</th>
<th>Communication</th>
<th>Quantitative Reasoning</th>
<th>Integrative Experiences</th>
<th>Focused Inquiry</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Year One</strong></td>
<td>Core Writing</td>
<td>Core Math</td>
<td>Natural Sciences &amp; Quantitative Reasoning</td>
<td>Arts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Year Two</strong></td>
<td>Writing in Integrative Experiences</td>
<td></td>
<td>Social Sciences &amp; Globalization</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Year Three</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>Quantitative Reasoning in Integrative Experiences</td>
<td>Humanities &amp; Ethics</td>
<td>Sciences &amp; Technology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Year Four</strong></td>
<td>Writing in Focused Inquiry</td>
<td></td>
<td>Diversity &amp; Constitutional Analysis</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Year Five</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>Quantitative Reasoning in Focused Inquiry</td>
<td></td>
<td>Humanities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Year Six</strong></td>
<td>Writing in Capstones</td>
<td>Quantitative Reasoning in Capstones</td>
<td>Integration in Capstones</td>
<td>Synthesis and Application in Capstones</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Year Seven</strong></td>
<td>Focus on development and collection of data relevant to institutional accreditation.</td>
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Prospective assessment methods (examples):

1. Writing: electronic portfolios could be collected for every student (or samples of students), with materials submitted at each stage of the Core (Fundamental Practice, Integrative Experience, Focused Inquiry, and Capstone. These portfolios could then be used in a number of ways and sampled for assessments that are formative (what skills are students in a given course demonstrating), developmental (how does their writing compare between Core Writing and later
Capstone courses), and/or interventional (if students are not performing to expectations at the Capstone level, where should they be learning the skills that they are missing?).

2. Math: Tools such as Accuplacer, used for math placement, may be used for gauging development over the duration of the Core. Beyond that kind of assessment, a specific series of related and scaled exams could be used both in Core courses and as assessment tools for the Core curriculum.

3. Integrative Experience: These courses present particular challenges in terms of assessment methods because they include two distinct focuses. Each will have to be defined both broadly for the Core and specifically for the disciplines involved. What an assessment might measure as an indicator of “integration” remains somewhat unclear, so, methods would have to be developed that would assess:
   - knowledge and/or learning in areas to be integrated
   - integration of those areas
   - the relation of those topics and integrations to the competencies
   - what success in integrating areas of inquiry looks like at both the local and larger levels

4. Focused Inquiry: These courses will be challenging in terms of assessment because none of them necessarily include writing or communication skills as an emphasized competency. The categories are very broad, and in at least one case, an integrated pair of areas of inquiry. At this point, more definition of these courses is necessary before assessments can be articulated.
Appendix H: Analysis of Resources Required

POTENTIAL RESOURCE NEEDS:

Assessment. In any scenario, assessment will be required and will have a resource impact.

- Core assessment is likely to occur both centrally and at the unit or college level, thus increasing the time and effort required from faculty, support staff, and Core Board members. This additional time and effort, insofar as it exceeds existing assessment planning and execution, will have to be compensated for through stipends and/or release from other expected responsibilities.

- University and Core Curriculum assessment officers will likely be needed.

Course development. The initial three years of new course development is likely to absorb considerable faculty time beyond the ongoing course development work occurring in academic units.

- Retaining the current Core structure will call for some new courses and refining of some existing courses to align the offerings with Core competencies and SLOs.

- The Silver and Blue Alternatives will particularly invite the creation of new courses and redesign of some existing courses.

- The Blue Alternative, because it will require new integrated courses that may invite creation of team-taught and cross-disciplinary courses, will call for a more time-consuming collaborative process that will sometimes involve several faculty members.

- In all three alternatives, new content areas such as ethical reasoning and globalization will need to be incorporated into Core course offerings.

- These efforts, insofar as they exceed normal ongoing course development, will have to be compensated through stipends and/or course release.

Academic Audit Reports. It will be necessary for the student audit system to accommodate revised or new Core requirements. The relative complexity of the adopted plan will dictate the scope of this work.

Core Administration. In any scenario, the work of the Core Office and the Core Board will increase, especially in the roll-out phase.

- The Core Board will review and approve all existing and new Core courses both for initial implementation and in ongoing review.

- The Core Office will manage the transition to the new program to assure balance and availability of sections for all students at all phases of the revised Core’s implementation.

- The Core Office and Board will devote additional time to transfer articulation in light of a new or revised UNR Core.

- The Core Office and Board will be central to the assessment of the Core.
POTENTIAL RESOURCE SHIFTS:

FTE distribution or redistribution among academic units:
The currently-instituted task to reduce most degree programs to 120 credits is causing loss of FTE in some academic units. Although a revised or new Core Curriculum will not reduce degree credits overall, The Silver and Blue Alternatives will cause shifting of 6 credits from the Core to the degree programs.

- Requiring fewer Core credits, as in the Silver or Blue Alternatives, will reduce FTE in some units that currently deliver significant service credits in the Core.
- Requiring fewer credits plus decoupling credits from discipline-specific courses (as in the Blue alternative) will not only reduce Core FTE in some traditionally service-heavy units but will also allow for the movement of this FTE to other units.
- New content areas such as ethical reasoning and globalization will create new opportunities for units to offer Core courses.
- The Blue Alternative will encourage cross-disciplinary and team-taught classes that may also shift and divide FTE across more units.

Facilities:
Changes in course delivery methods and patterns may create the need for different instructional spaces or a larger supply of certain types of rooms (laboratories or large lecture halls, for example).