

PLANNING PARAMETERS FOR A LOWER DIVISION PROGRAM

**Prepared by the Executive Council (EC)
General Faculty Organization
UW Bothell**

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This document consists of a process summary, findings, “talking points” for discussions with external stakeholders, and a brief description of the next phrase of lower division planning.

Process summary

This fall, the EC was asked to endorse, acting on behalf of the faculty, the goals presented in the draft (at that time) “2707 report.”

The EC’s resolution of October 4, 2004, states in part:

“We support the report’s goals as a plan for how UWB can address regional needs, as long as these initiatives are funded consistent with the quality of existing programs and the development of new programs at the same level of excellence.

“We authorize the GFO Chair and the EC Vice Chair to work with the Vice Chancellor of Academic Affairs to charge an advisory body to develop planning parameters for the proposed lower division program, within the context of UWB’s mission and strategic goals.”

The advisory body formed was dubbed “EC plus” as it consisted of the EC plus other interested faculty and non-faculty academic personnel. This document was developed as the result of the following discussions: a GFO “listening session” on November 8, 2004, and EC meetings on November 15 and November 29, 2004.

This document will be transmitted to an appointed task force that will be charged to carry out the next stage: detailed planning. Many of the findings below therefore refer to this task force.

Findings

We therefore offer the following as planning parameters for a potential lower division program at UW Bothell.

1. Quality and excellence. We have achieved great things at UWB, and we want a lower division program to respect, build upon, and enhance what we have achieved, both in individual programs and across the campus. Maintaining quality and excellence, and having the long-term vision to achieve this (e.g.,

assuring that we can attract and retain excellent faculty) is the primary principle that must underlie lower division planning.

2. “Learning communities”. The task force should use the concept of “learning communities” or a “university college” in designing the basic elements of the lower division curriculum. The task force should

[a] Develop and articulate this concept so that the characteristics and benefits of this approach to education are made clear to people “inside” UWB, to prospective students, and to our external stakeholders.

[b] Take into account the best of what other institutions have done, and with specific application to UWB’s resources, opportunities, and mission.

[c] Determine the extent to which lower division requirements will be achieved by the learning communities versus which will be achieved by stand-alone courses (including stand-alone courses that are pre-requisites for upper division majors). This will be fundamental to curriculum design and scheduling.

[d] Design the learning communities so that they also can accommodate non-traditional students.

3. An integrated design that allows students to enter at different stages of their education. The lower division program will admit both students at the freshman level and transfer students, who will enroll in lower division courses. Planning for entering freshman will require attention to “learning communities” and an integrated 4-year experience, while planning for many transfers will require attention to specific lower division course offerings to meet the needs of students admitted to upper division majors. There may be significant overlap in the offerings for these two groups, yet these are distinct “pathways,” and the problems, constraints, and alternatives for planning also may be distinct.

4. “Creative” design and use of resources. We assume that per student funding from the state for lower division instruction will be significantly lower than what we have for upper division. We will be challenged to assure quality even though we will not be able to use the exact approaches that have made us successful to date. The task force should explore models such as

[a] Expanded use of non-faculty academic resources for writing, math and quantitative skills, information and technology literacy, etc. (The task force should address the resource implications of this model.)

[b] Judicious combinations of tenure-track and non-tenure-track faculty, with permanent faculty having responsibility for development of and teaching in the “learning communities.”

[c] Outside funding, particularly to support innovations in pedagogy, learning communities, and assessment.

[d] Educational technology, including consideration of components of particular courses that may be delivered on-line.

5. Distinctiveness and the value of a 4-year UWB experience. The task force must clarify the specifics of the target audience and what our unique benefits to them will be. Designing these unique benefits into the lower division program will both assure quality and be the basis for articulating a message to attract prospective freshman students. It should include themes including:

[a] The educational value of a small learning community.

[b] Strong faculty-student and student-student relationships.

[c] Interdisciplinarity.

[d] A focus on writing and math skills.

[e] Students who enroll at UWB as freshman will be uniquely prepared to benefit from many of our upper division programs.

6. Structure. The task force needs to address the details of structure. The lower division program should have many functional connections with other programs. At the same time, the lower division program should have a distinct and separate leadership. This will not be a unit of IAS or a unit within IAS.

7. Faculty. It is desirable to have faculty who are “dedicated” to the lower division program yet maintain a “home” in another program. Therefore, we need a “hybrid” model with a small number of dedicated core faculty, who may have either primary, but limited term appointments in the lower division program, or joint appointments with their home programs. The task force needs to determine if either of these, or some other approach, is best for the lower division program and the rest of UWB.

The other part of this “hybrid” is extensive use of cross-program sharing of resources with existing programs (e.g., the lower division program could buy out faculty from existing courses to teach topics such as calculus or sociology). The following principles should be used in designing faculty participation:

[a] To avoid a permanently “tiered” faculty (i.e., where some faculty teach only in the lower division), the dedicated core faculty should be rotated in from their home programs. For example, a given faculty member may teach in the lower division “learning community” for 3 years and then return to her/his home department. Alternatively, the task force may determine that it would be more desirable to have joint appointments, with continuing (although limited) teaching in the home program. In short, while dedication is desirable for oversight and continuity, permanent appointment of faculty in the lower division program seems undesirable.

[b] The core faculty will be responsible for the design, development, and maintenance of the “learning communities.” The task force should determine the degree to which other faculty should teach in the learning communities.

[c] The task force should develop a proposed policy for appointments for lower division core faculty (e.g., whether there should be a term appointment to the lower division program or a joint appointment with the home program. In any event, there should be no joint appointments for untenured faculty.

8. Relationship with existing programs. We desire the development of excellence in lower division education without harming, and, ideally, strengthening, our existing successful upper division programs.

[a] The lower division program should be designed for students who want to pursue an upper division program at UWB (currently, the Nursing Program is the exception), not those who want to transfer to upper division at another school.

[b] The task force should develop a proposed policy for managing FTEs and budgets (among the lower division program and upper division programs) and how faculty from existing programs will be “shared” with the lower division program. The arrangements must respect the needs of existing programs, e.g., programs whose accreditation requires a minimum percentage of classes taught by permanent faculty.

[c] Many or all stand-alone lower division classes conceivably could be part of either the lower division program or an existing program. Courses such as introductory economics or psychology are taught in large sections in many 4-year schools in order to “subsidize” upper division offerings. The task force should develop a policy on the potential for existing programs to offer lower division courses. This policy may distinguish between courses such as economics that would prepare students for multiple programs and courses such as accounting that may be a prerequisite for only one program.

9. Student access. The task force will need to determine if the program can be offered in both the day and the evening. We want to continue our mission of serving non-traditional students, yet we recognize the state’s need to serve the “baby boom echo.”

10. Relationships with other institutions.

[a] As long as the lower division program has a limited size, we must develop plans for referring students to community colleges and/or UWS for specialized coursework that cannot be offered at UWB.

[b] If the planned pilot co-admission/co-enrollment program is continued, students with this status may take lower division classes at UWB. The task force should consider the impact that having lower division classes at UWB will have on co-admission/co-enrollment.

[c] The task force should address whether co-admission/co-enrollment would also be appropriate for entering freshmen, since UWB will not necessarily be able to offer all the courses that entering freshmen will require at the lower division.

11. Planning for scale. There are three critical points here.

[a] The scale of the proposed lower division program is a constraint on the total number of classes that can be offered, and thus whether the lower division program can provide either the full range of courses needed by every student or the variety of courses sought by *many* students. The task force should address the specifics of how much can be offered by UWB and how much students need will have to come from elsewhere. This should inform a number of points raised here, including relationships with other institutions, the characteristics of the students who will most benefit from our lower division program, and the messages we present to attract these students.

[b] The size of the lower division program is not something over which UWB will have complete control. This point emphasizes the need to build flexibility into our planning processes and to the lower division program itself. The task force needs to address whether the design chosen is robust with respect to dramatic increases – either initially or at a later date – in the number of students to be enrolled in the lower division program. For example, at a dramatically increased scale,

- Would the “learning community” model be viable?
- Would the model of a separate lower division program with a core faculty who are dedicated, but limited term, be viable?

[c] The task force should address explicitly the range of lower division enrollments over which its design is robust. Ideally, a great deal of flexibility with respect to scale will be designed, but this is not infinite. At what scale/number of students does the model need to be rethought? This point is particularly critical as it can be documented to trigger a future reassessment of the lower division design.

12. Student support. We will need strong infrastructure for student support, including academic units – Library, Writing Center, and Quantitative Skills Center – and in Student Affairs.

13. Development of “best practices”. We have the opportunity to generate, to be a model for, and disseminate “best practices” in many areas: learning

community, assessment, teaching of writing and math, use of technology, cross-program and interdisciplinary teaching, training of university teachers, etc. Detailed planning should address the extent to which we must decide among these (i.e., deciding what to focus on and decide what to make secondary), and design the lower division program in light of these decisions.

14. Assessment. Assessment deserves particular attention, as planning for assessment should be integral to the lower division program. The task force should address how pilots and/or models for generating formative and summative assessment data in the lower division program could be expanded to be used across UWB programs.

15. Plan elements. The task force should create a detailed plan, including necessary steps for implementation, for each of the following areas

[a] Curriculum design, indicating what elements are part of the learning community and what are stand alone, and what are offered by UWB and what are offered in some other manner.

[b] Hiring, indicating what additional faculty and staff resources are needed.

[c] Support services for students and faculty.

[d] Marketing, indicating the essential elements of a message to appeal to the target group(s) of prospective students.

Talking points

1. In order to meet the educational goals of the region, a 2-pronged approach with distinct but complementary strategies to provide the educational opportunities that the people of this region need (including but not limited to preparation for careers) in the knowledge-based economy of the 21st century:

[a] Expand and enhance the existing “2+2” pathways via continuing partnerships and new initiatives with CCC and other community colleges.

[b] Create a new pathway by admitting a small group of academically-qualified and -motivated freshman students.

2. Achieve “blending in the middle” to make the 2+2 model work better. Use a variety of means that enhance the ability of lower division students (including running start students) to transition smoothly to UWB’s existing upper division programs. This might include

[a] Offering specific sophomore level courses that currently present barriers to completing lower division and delay readiness for UWB’s upper division programs.

[b] Piloting co-admission and co-enrollment so that community college students with clear academic goals have clear pathways to achieving a 4-year education.

3. Establish a lower-division program and admit freshmen who plan to study in the upper division programs (current and future) offered by UWB. This new pathway will help meet the region's increasing demand by students for a 4-year UW education and by employers for graduates with a UW education.

4. The freshman group we will target, in addition to being academically-qualified and -motivated, will be attracted and particularly well served by the relatively small size of the lower division program and by features that are designed into it. We will create a "university college" / "learning community" that will emphasize, build upon, and expand our existing strengths in fostering faculty-student and student-student relationships that enhance learning.

5. Although many specifics need to be worked out, through our planning and development we will endeavor to make the lower division program a model for education (including writing, mathematics, and information literacy), learning communities, and assessment. Of particular importance, what we do regarding assessment for the lower division program could be a pilot or model for assessment across all UWB programs.

6. As with everything we do, our goal is to continue and expand upon the excellence and reputation we have achieved at UWB and the legacy of excellence of the UW.

The next phase

The next stage will be detailed planning by an appointed task force. Faculty on this task force will be compensated for their time and leadership. The task force will require support for logistics, data collection, communication, etc.

The task force's charge will need to incorporate a time line for recommendations, review/approval, and implementation. Either in the charge or early in the work of the task force, establish a work plan that will allow the task force to respond to developments in Legislature's 2005 session. For example, the plan could be based upon a set of scenarios that will need to change as the session unfolds.

Continual communication with faculty leadership and academic leadership should be built into the task force's work plan.

UWB has established processes for the review of new programs, curricular changes with significant budgetary impacts, and individual courses. The task force should work with the EC and the Academic Council to plan for and coordinate these steps.