Baccalaureate Options
(Between 1-3 courses, 1-6 hours)

1. Option #1 - Required UNIV Student Success Courses deployed once or at yearly intervals.

2. Option #3 - Enhanced Communication courses are new 1-3 hour writing or oral communication intensive add-ons that pair with a specific major Studies course and address the specific communication needs within the major.

#3. Option #3. One or two designated Major Studies courses that integrate with the SLOs by focusing upon Collaboration (SLO #6) or Synthesis (SLO #8).
Over the last year, the PLUS Task Force has studied curricula at institutions throughout the country, examined scholarly texts on general education reform, sought input from the NIU community through faculty and student surveys, made presentations to the curriculum committees of every college, and received feedback from each of these committees.

One of the dominant themes that emerged is the need to better integrate the entire Baccalaureate curriculum. The Task Force has identified a number of distinct options that might be followed to increase integration across the four-year Baccalaureate experience and between general education and majors studies. These options would be added onto any general education curriculum changes in order to better integrate the curriculum.

1. **Option #1 – Add a 1-3 hour UNIV Student Success Experience requirement**

The existing UNIV experience at NIU has been proven to be effective at improving student success. Possible delivery models include: college specific UNIV courses, large-group/break-out vehicles, intensive pre-term UNIV courses, or piggyback the existing UNIV success-focused content with additional academic content. More detailed information about these delivery models has been generated by First- and Second-Year Experience and is available at the PLUS web site: www.niu.edu/plus.

Option #1 would vary between 1 and 3 credit hours. Possibilities include:

1.1. A 1-hour UNIV 101/201 course required for all incoming first-year and transfer students.

The additional academic content of the UNIV could include: the introduction of the Baccalaureate Student Learning Outcomes and defining student expectations regarding these outcomes, and/or employment of a common student ePortfolio system. That system will serve as a warehouse for significant general education and Baccalaureate assignments and the reflections regarding those assignments.

2. **Option #2 – Add an Enhanced Communication Credit requirement**

All colleges have indicated a need to improve the writing and oral communication skills of NIU undergraduates. While COMS 100, ENGL 103, and ENGL 104 represent solid introductory courses, they are often perceived as disconnected from the major studies and student interests. There is value in writing and oral communication within the major. Yet, incorporating substantial writing into courses within the major can prove difficult. There is often not enough time to cover course content and work on student communication in much depth. Therefore, the goal is to provide a mechanism for making communication within the major more impactful.
This option creates three 1- to 3-credit hour upper-division courses for both writing and oral communication. Departments would specify one or more writing intensive or oral communication courses in their major degree programs and link one or more of those courses to “integrative” written or oral communications courses. Specific major courses would be linked to specific sections of the communications courses.

Departments are free to make integrative communication a requirement, or they may substitute the three credit hours, total, of integrative writing or integrative oral communication with one of the Gen Ed communication requirements.

3. Option # 3 – Add a 3-6 hour “Culminating Experience” requirement

The culminating experience element refers to the final academic component in a student’s Baccalaureate program. In order to better integrate this experience with the Baccalaureate, this option employs a one or two course requirement that ties all major students to one or both of the Student Learning Outcomes that focus upon Collaboration (SLO #6) and Synthesis (SLO #8).

These courses will vary depending on the field of study, and could include existing departmental courses including senior capstone projects.