1. The Baccalaureate Goals and Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs)

**Background:** In its 2010 report, the Baccalaureate Review Task Force identified the “Three C Baccalaureate Goals” (Critical Thinking, Creativity and Communication) and eight Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs) as cornerstones of an NIU undergraduate education. Together, these goals and SLOs articulate what an NIU graduate should know, value, and be able to do.

**Goal:** To consciously integrate university-wide learning goals throughout the entire program of study leading to the Baccalaureate

**Possible Solutions:** Please rate each possible solution and write any comments you have in the space provided underneath. For each possible solution, check the most appropriate box.

1.1 Map each degree program outcomes to the SLOs

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1.2. Ensure courses explicitly develop student progress in primary SLOs

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1.3. Configure General Education course distributional areas according to all eight SLOs

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1.4. Modify and enhance current UNIV courses to ensure student awareness of and progress in the SLOs

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1.5. Implement an e-portfolio package to facilitate student reflection and track student SLO achievement

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Comments about the Baccalaureate Goals and Student Learning Outcomes:
2. A Core Curriculum with Enhanced Writing Requirements

**Background:** Developing mechanisms to increase writing aptitude, both general and within one’s discipline, was identified by all colleges as an area for improvement in the Baccalaureate. Numerous national studies demonstrate that strong performance in more intensive writing classes enhances student retention and success.

**Goal:** Increase writing requirements across the curriculum beyond the Core Curriculum

**Possible Solutions:** Please rate each possible solution and write any comments you have in the space provided underneath. For each possible solution, check the most appropriate box.

2.1 Increase in-course writing requirements
- [ ] Unacceptable
- [ ] Weak
- [ ] Moderate
- [ ] Strong

2.2 Add a writing intensive general education seminar
- [ ] Unacceptable
- [ ] Weak
- [ ] Moderate
- [ ] Strong

2.3 Create a third-year writing requirement
- [ ] Unacceptable
- [ ] Weak
- [ ] Moderate
- [ ] Strong

2.4 Add a fourth-year writing requirement
- [ ] Unacceptable
- [ ] Weak
- [ ] Moderate
- [ ] Strong

2.5 Archive some or all of these products in an e-portfolio
- [ ] Unacceptable
- [ ] Weak
- [ ] Moderate
- [ ] Strong

**Comments about a Core Curriculum with Enhanced Writing Requirements:**
3. Content Exposure and Course Breadth

*Background:* General Education is the appropriate domain for encouraging academic breadth in specific domains of knowledge. A baccalaureate education that incorporates both depth and breadth reflects NIU’s traditional practices, national trends of reform, and the existing definition of general education put forward by the Higher Learning Commission of the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools.

*Goal:* To enhance curricular flexibility while ensuring that students receive an education that is both broad (often achieved through General Education courses) and deep (typically achieved through the major).

*Possible Solutions:* Please rate each possible solution and write any comments you have in the space provided underneath. For each possible solution, check the most appropriate box.

3.1. Replace the existing disciplinary distributional areas with broader, themed-based distributional areas

- Unacceptable
- Weak
- Moderate
- Strong

3.2. Assure that students achieve breadth in both content related to general domains of knowledge and skills as mapped out by the Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs)

- Unacceptable
- Weak
- Moderate
- Strong

3.3. Organize thematically linked course clusters, which would likely cross traditional departmental and college boundaries

- Unacceptable
- Weak
- Moderate
- Strong

3.4. Allow students to earn a general education minor in specific themes

- Unacceptable
- Weak
- Moderate
- Strong

*Comments about Content Exposure and Course Breath and possible thematic categories:*
4. Curricular Flexibility

**Background:** Responses from the curriculum committees of all of NIU’s colleges indicated a need for greater flexibility in the General Education curriculum. Our aim is to streamline a student’s path to graduation. The NIU General Education curriculum currently consists of 144 courses, compared a median value of 239 courses at 20 benchmarked programs from across the county.

**Goals:** *Expand options that make it easier for students to satisfy general education requirements*

**Possible Solutions:** Please rate each possible solution and write any comments you have in the space provided underneath. For each possible solution, check the most appropriate box.

4.1. Increase the number of courses that satisfy General Education requirements

- Unacceptable
- Weak
- Moderate
- Strong

4.2. Allow some upper division courses to fulfill general education requirements

- Unacceptable
- Weak
- Moderate
- Strong

4.3. Allow departments to tailor a portion of the General Education curriculum to address the specific needs of each discipline

- Unacceptable
- Weak
- Moderate
- Strong

4.4. Remove the course-for-course requirement for transfer credit

- Unacceptable
- Weak
- Moderate
- Strong

**Comments about Curricular Flexibility:**
5. High Impact Practices (HIPs)

**Background:** A great deal of critical learning occurs outside of the traditional lecture hall or classroom. Some “high impact practices” are conducted for credit, such as independent research papers or projects guided by faculty mentors. Also of great value are non-credit bearing or “co-curricular” HIPs, such as internships in ones anticipated career field, volunteer work, or life experiences that directly lead to attainment of various SLOs. Finally, national data indicates that HIPs contribute strongly to student retention, an increased graduation rate, and career success.

**Goal:** To formalize student participation in high impact practices such as co-curricular practices and engaged learning opportunities.

**Possible Solutions:** Please rate each possible solution and write any comments you have in the space provided underneath. For each possible solution, check the most appropriate box.

5.1. Place HIPs on transcripts or in an e-portfolio

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5.2. Add a co-curricular requirement for graduation

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5.3. Expand credit-bearing course offerings in experiential learning

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5.4. Allow HIPs to document SLO achievement

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**Comments about High Impact Practices:**
Please assist us by filling out the following:

**Status:**
Current Student ____  Alumni ____  Faculty____  Staff____  Corporate Partner ____
Prefer not to say ____

**Students:** If you were a student at NIU, approximately what percentage of your GENERAL EDUCATION courses did you (or will you) complete at NIU?

- ___ 0 to 25% (0 classes)
- ___ 1 to 25% (approx 3 classes)
- ___ 25 to 50% (approx 6 classes)
- ___ 50 to 75% (approx 9 classes)
- ___ 75 to 90% (approx 11 classes)
- ___ 90 to 100% (more than 13 classes)
- ___ I don’t know.

**College:** In what college is your major, anticipated major, or current affiliation?

- ___ Business
- ___ Eng. & Engineering Technology
- ___ Liberal Arts & Sciences (Humanities)
- ___ Liberal Arts & Sciences (Natural Sciences & Mathematics)
- ___ Visual & Performing Arts
- ___ Education
- ___ Health & Human Sciences
- ___ Liberal Arts & Sciences (Social Sciences)
- ___ Undecided

If you wish to participate in an upcoming focus group, please include your contact information here.

Name: ________________________________  Email: ________________________________

Thank you for your participation!

The Task Force will use your input to help prepare and develop a strategy for restructuring our baccalaureate and general education programs. Your participation is essential to the improvement of a Baccalaureate curriculum that empowers our instructional faculty in supporting our student population. This worksheet is a critical step and will be followed by subsequent focus groups in February and March to develop a community-based model for curricular change.

For more information about the PLUS Task Force and who to contact if you have questions, please go to:

http://www.niu.edu/plus or email Michael Kolb: aloha@niu.edu

- The PLUS Task Force