

## **Boston University Task Force on General Education**

### **The BU Hub: A Vision for University-Wide Undergraduate General Education at Boston University**

March 4, 2016

#### **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

This report proposes a vision for Boston University's first ever University-Wide General Education Program. It is the culmination of a 15-month effort by the first of two task forces; the second will develop a plan for implementation, which will also take about a year.<sup>1</sup>

Drawing on the rich history and distinctive institutional strengths of Boston University, the report identifies the knowledge, skills, and habits of mind that all BU undergraduates need to thrive in their professional, personal and civic lives. The proposal highlights six areas or capacities, several of which contain more than a single element:

1. Philosophical, Aesthetic, and Historical Interpretation
2. Scientific and Social Inquiry
3. Quantitative Reasoning
4. Diversity, Civic Engagement, and Global Citizenship
5. Communication
6. A set of skills and experiences called the 'Intellectual Toolkit'.

Recognizing the size and diversity of Boston University, the report also outlines multiple pathways for students to develop these capacities.

To meet students' needs and mobilize the full range of resources available for this critical mission, BU's University-Wide General Education Program must be considerably more than a re-arrangement of existing courses. The Task Force expects the program to include a combination of currently-offered, revised and new courses and experiences. For each of the areas, students will need multiple encounters. Every area will include course work and some will require both courses and co-curricular activities. General education embraces and exploits the social, institutional, and intellectual richness of residential higher education and BU's location in a vibrant urban community. While course work remains the centerpiece of the program, the Task Force maintains that face-to-face interactions—among students in their residences and across their dinner tables, with faculty in mentoring relationships and on research projects, in service learning, supervised internships, and creative enterprises—help students apply and integrate the learning they do in the classroom and cultivate essential knowledge, skills, and habits of mind.

The recommendations that follow encapsulate an approach to education designed to equip students to engage with complexity, diversity, change, and with enduring features of human cultures. It exposes students to a broad range of knowledge across disciplines, encourages a

---

<sup>1</sup> For more on the General Education effort and process, please see the Task Force website: [www.bu.edu/gened](http://www.bu.edu/gened).

sense of social responsibility and a commitment to social justice, and develops a set of widely applicable habits of mind, such as communication, analytical, interpretative, quantitative and computational skills, and the ability to apply knowledge in diverse settings. University-wide General Education should become the hub of every BU undergraduate's experience—the fulfillment of the university's commitment to prepare all students to thrive in the world, to flourish in their professional, civic, and personal lives.

## CONTENTS

### The BU Hub: A Vision for University-Wide Undergraduate General Education at Boston University

#### Introduction

#### The Boston University Graduate: Personal Qualities

#### The Core Knowledge, Skills, and Habits of Mind

1. Philosophical, Aesthetic, and Historical Interpretation
  - Philosophical Inquiry and Life's Meanings
  - Aesthetic Exploration
  - Historical Consciousness
2. Scientific and Social Inquiry
  - Scientific Inquiry
  - Social Inquiry
3. Quantitative Reasoning
4. Diversity, Civic Engagement, and Global Citizenship
  - The Individual in Community
  - Global Citizenship and Intercultural Literacy
  - Ethical Reasoning
5. Communication
  - Writing
  - Oral Communication
  - Digital/Multimedia Expression
6. Intellectual Toolkit
  - Critical Thinking
  - Research and Information Literacy
  - Teamwork/Collaboration
  - Creativity/Innovation
  - Life Skills

#### Possible Pathways

#### The BU Hub Signature: The BU Cross-College Challenge

#### Further Thoughts and Recommendations

#### A Note on NEASC Accreditation

#### Background: The Work of the Task Force on General Education

#### The Task Force on General Education Membership

## **The BU Hub: University-Wide General Education at Boston University**

The founding president of Boston University, William Fairfield Warren, arrived in Boston from his post as a Methodist missionary in Germany. Warren carried with him German ideas about the modern university as a synthesis of liberal arts and professional training, and a belief in higher education as a way to promote understanding among diverse peoples of the globe. In the university charter, Warren pledged that BU would “promote virtue and piety and learning” in both the liberal and the “useful” arts and sciences.<sup>2</sup>

More than a century later, Warren’s commitments to global engagement, to the lifetime love of learning and the pursuit of truth, and to combining the liberal arts and sciences with professional training still define undergraduate education at BU. Updating those traditions to meet the needs of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the University-Wide General Education Program identifies the core knowledge, skills, and habits of mind that BU undergraduates need to thrive in their professional, personal and civic lives—and multiple pathways to attain them.

Animating these recommendations is a fundamental promise, affirmed in Boston University’s strategic plan, “to develop the special undergraduate educational environment that combines our commitment to a liberal arts and sciences education with professional opportunities.” Professional success, personal fulfillment, and responsible citizenship require practical knowledge: an ability to get things done in a complex world. They also require familiarity with the principles underlying practical knowledge. Such familiarity enables reflection and fosters an understanding of the way practical knowledge is derived. It also enables students to assess which ideas require questioning and innovation. These habits of mind will equip BU students in the professional schools with the ability to think about immediate problems contextually and critically, within the broad scope of human endeavors, and to address problems more creatively and holistically. At the same time, this integrated education will allow students in the liberal arts and sciences to gain grounding in a professional realm, and to apply the broad perspective of the liberal arts to the future workplace.

The interdependence of theory and practice is evident not only *within* the disciplines, modes of knowing, and skill sets of each professional school and each field in the liberal arts, but also *across* these schools and fields. Because BU is home to diverse professional schools as well as high-level research in the liberal arts and sciences, it is uniquely able to introduce undergraduates to the realities, possibilities, and promise of interconnections between the professional schools and the liberal arts. That promise includes prospects not only for productive academic and professional innovation but also for augmenting a sense of civic responsibility and for living a life well.

Through general education, students in the College of Arts and Sciences, the College of General Studies, and the professional schools alike stand to benefit from learning at the

---

<sup>2</sup> These characteristics are named in Boston University’s motto: “Learning, Virtue, Piety.”

intersection of these colleges and disciplines. BU has the means to secure students this benefit in a way that should be attractive for all the right reasons: providing an educational experience unique to BU; enhancing students' learning in their major by exposing them to its wider presuppositions and "real life" significance; broadening students' intellectual horizons beyond their majors and traditional requirements (in their respective schools or colleges); laying the groundwork for innovation by introducing students to both the interrelationship and reciprocal promise of liberal arts and professional disciplines; promoting a sense of the integrated and unfinished character of higher studies as an inducement to life-long learning; and providing the foundation for a balanced life, and for informed participation in civic debate.

The size, diversity, and distinctive character of BU also motivate the Task Force's recommendation for multiple pathways for students to fulfill expectations for general education. While a one-size-fits-all model, based on a common set of general education courses for every student, has worked admirably at a limited number of smaller institutions, it does not suit the distinctive character and institutional history of Boston University.<sup>3</sup> Rather than a set of requirements our students must fulfill, we think of the University-Wide General Education Program as guiding our students' choices. In the range and variety of pathways, the program encourages exploration of the rich array of choices BU offers as a major research university. That choice is one of the primary reasons students select BU, and we need to deliver on that promise.

By promoting varied pathways to attaining core capacities, the BU Hub departs from the traditional general education practice of simply requiring students to check off boxes, to complete certain courses outside their major field of study.<sup>4</sup> While it does not identify a definitive corpus of knowledge that every student is expected to know, the Task Force's recommendations map out a set of core capacities—areas of knowledge, skills, and habits of mind—that all undergraduates should develop.<sup>5</sup> The proposed program also differs from many standard general education programs by encouraging the development of core knowledge, skills and habits of mind across all four years. Some of the core areas will be familiar—the traditional strengths that have distinguished university education in the United States; some will be new or newly-framed in response to developing structures of knowledge and to changes in the world. A single course or experience may well develop more than one capacity.

To meet students' needs and mobilize the full range of resources available for this critical mission, BU's University-Wide General Education Program must be considerably more than a re-arrangement of existing courses. The Task Force expects the BU Hub to

---

<sup>3</sup> The most prominent exemplars of this model remain Columbia University, the University of Chicago, and St. John's College. Significantly, even Chicago has moved away from a common general education curriculum for all undergraduates, currently affirming that "Not everyone takes the same classes, but everyone studies similar disciplines." See <https://collegeadmissions.uchicago.edu/academics/core>

<sup>4</sup> Traditional breadth requirements call for a certain number of courses in disciplines outside the major. That approach defines the distribution requirements at institutions like Yale, Notre Dame, and the University of Rochester, as well as the divisional studies requirements in CAS.

<sup>5</sup> Prominent examples of such an approach to general education include recent curriculum reforms at Stanford University, Emory University, the University of Maryland, and Case Western Reserve University.

include a combination of currently-offered, revised and new courses and experiences. For each of the areas, students will need multiple encounters. Every area will include course work and some will require both courses and co-curricular activities.

General education embraces and exploits the social, institutional, and intellectual richness of residential higher education and BU's location in a vibrant urban community. While course work remains the centerpiece of the program, the Task Force maintains that face-to-face interactions—among students in their residences and across their dinner tables, with faculty in mentoring relationships and on research projects, in service learning, supervised internships, and creative enterprises—help students apply and integrate the learning they do in the classroom and cultivate essential knowledge, skills, and habits of mind. The Task Force also recommends that students have abundant opportunities for immersion in the city of Boston, both in their classes and through a variety of extra-curricular experiences ranging from community service to academic research to guided exploration of the city's artistic resources. By embracing the urban environment and partnering with the community, University-wide General Education can help develop the capacities that every BU graduate should possess and help the university realize its commitment to strengthening and expanding the University's connections to Boston.

The recommendations that follow encapsulate an approach to education designed to equip students to engage with complexity, diversity, change, and with enduring features of human cultures. It exposes students to a broad range of knowledge across disciplines, encourages a sense of social responsibility and a commitment to social justice, and develops a set of widely applicable habits of mind, such as communication, analytical, interpretative, quantitative and computational skills, and the ability to apply knowledge in diverse settings. University-wide General Education should become the hub of every BU undergraduate's experience—the fulfillment of the university's commitment to prepare all students to thrive in the world, to flourish in their professional, civic, and personal lives.

### **The Boston University Graduate: Personal Qualities**

Underlying William Fairfield Warren's founding vision is a set of personal qualities that Boston University graduates need in order for their educations to contribute to productive, meaningful lives. Recent research, publicized in academic and popular media, has reasserted the importance of "character," finding that determination, resilience and adaptability—"grit"—matter more than such indicators as SAT scores for students' success in college and beyond. As Boston University seeks to educate students who are, in the words of its mission statement, "reflective, resourceful individuals ready to live, adapt, and lead in an interconnected world," our requirements should deliberately and explicitly call on students to develop and practice personal qualities and habits of mind that embody our values and aspirations.

In developing the core capacities of the BU Hub and gaining expertise in a chosen major, Boston University students should be obliged to take risks, to face the possibility of failure, to regroup and rethink, to learn **intrepidity** in thought and action, and **humility**

in the face of all they do not yet know and understand. Their experiences should stretch them beyond their current conceptions of themselves and the world, and expand their capacities for **empathy** by creating frequent opportunities for them to walk imaginatively in others' shoes. A BU education should develop in students the **resilience** to recover and learn from disappointments and setbacks, and the **nimbleness** to recognize opportunity and respond creatively to changing circumstances. Through experiences in and out of the classroom, they should develop **self-discipline** and grow into **self-sufficiency**, able to take responsibility for themselves and their actions as a condition for being **responsible** to others as **ethical** members of communities. With wisdom the ultimate lifelong goal, a BU education should help students learn to make the time and develop the habit of quiet reflection necessary for **self-awareness** and a thoughtful, well-examined life. BU students should emerge from their undergraduate experience more **world-wise** than when they entered, and with heightened **curiosity** about themselves, others, and the world around them.

## **The Core Skills, Knowledge, and Habits of Mind**

### **1. Philosophical, Aesthetic, and Historical Interpretation**

A sophisticated capacity for interpretation is a necessary condition for understanding one's world and one's being in the world. Interpretation is a primary way of finding and creating meaning in our lives, and of apprehending the complexities and wonder of being human. It is essential to ethical and responsible action. It is essential to civil society. BU students are, and will continue to be, constantly confronted with the challenge of interpreting an array of human expressions, from texts to images to music, from news reports to legal documents, from blogs to tweets to instagrams, from ads to works of art. Interpretation is a way of understanding the meanings of these expressions, a process of analysis and synthesis. Most fundamentally, it requires us to take these expressions apart and put them back together, but to do so reflectively with a view toward determining one's own motivations and assumptions. Interpretation encourages self-awareness. Interpretation is not summary. It pays attention to details, to the non-literal, to the tacit and the deceptive, and to context. Thinking about interpretation entails considering the significance or lack of significance of the intention and aspects of the historical situation of the person responsible for the expression. Thinking about interpretation develops critical consciousness.

In acquiring skills of interpretation, students learn how to grapple with others' viewpoints, not least viewpoints that contradict their own. Interpreting another's expression can perhaps even help one put oneself in his or her shoes. Interpretations of a particular human expression will vary among interpreters and over time. Learning to interpret in relation to others' or past interpretations also exposes students to other points of view and encourages students to listen to and take account of them in their own interpretation.

Interpretation can also facilitate distinguishing between manners of expression that work and those that do not. Interpretation thus supports critical evaluation and the development

of students' own abilities to express themselves. To develop these skills, students must confront a range of interpretive problems: they must critically examine the arts, investigate times different from their own era, and consider enduring questions about life's meanings.

### *Philosophical inquiry and life's meanings*

Philosophical inquiry empowers and enriches students by introducing them to rigorous analysis of their ways of thinking and acting and the possible reasons for their being at all. Fundamental to a number of disciplines, philosophical inquiry confronts students with such time-honored questions as: What can I know? What should I do? What may I hope for? By learning how to pose such questions critically, all BU students will learn how to investigate and think for themselves about their place in nature and history, as well as their responsibilities to one another, to themselves, and to the earth. In this way, philosophical inquiry complements interpretations of life's meanings, including those provided in diverse religious, historical, cultural, and scientific contexts.

Philosophical inquiry is a natural component of a general education program because it provokes students, from the outset of their educations, to test the default belief systems with which they have grown up and to open themselves to a more richly considered understanding of themselves and their place in the world. It encourages self-awareness and self-sufficiency, and consideration of one's responsibility in the world. It satisfies the undergraduate student's desire for a stimulating intellectual curriculum, one that concerns itself with fundamental issues of existence. Philosophical inquiry, within a general education program, fulfills the promise of the university to concern itself with the inner life of its students as well as to provide the practical skills that help students establish their careers.

### *Aesthetic exploration*

Literature and the visual and performing arts express complex human thought and feeling in a search to understand and find meaning in human lives. Through words, images and sounds, by making pictures and telling stories, literature and the arts explore the human condition: Why do we love, hate, struggle, lie, cheat, forgive, enjoy? The arts make us reflect. They encourage self-awareness and empathy through the exercise of what philosopher and legal scholar Martha Nussbaum calls "the insights of the compassionate imagination."<sup>6</sup> As imaginative creations that we encounter, the arts not only explore human experience, but make it. When we read a novel, we walk in others' shoes; when we watch a film or look at a painting, we see the world through others' eyes; when we listen to music we participate in currents of feeling that others have expressed in sound. Experience of the arts offers deep communion with other minds and hearts across time and across cultures, brings beauty into our lives, enlivens us to the varieties of beauty in and around the world, renews the spirit, and opens the senses to the perceptual world. The arts help make us fully human.

---

<sup>6</sup> *Poetic Justice: The Literary Imagination and Public Life* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1995), xviii.

Aesthetic interpretation – the ability to analyze how a poem (or a sonata, a painting, a film, a play) works and what are its meanings – deepens our experience of the arts and is necessary to our ability to learn from their wisdom. Developing the skills of aesthetic interpretation unlocks a variety of insights. Students learn how artists have used techniques and conventions to extend the human capacity to express and communicate. They come to appreciate how context – historical, political, aesthetic, biographical – is bound up in artistic expression and interpretation. Students gain essential understanding of their own and others’ cultures. Interpreting the works of others may help students become better able to explore and express their own experience.

Boston University graduates should know enough of the history, media and methods of the arts to appreciate them through a lifetime. As graduates of BU, they should have developed the habit of reading literature closely and with pleasure, attending concerts, films and plays as informed, critically-astute audiences, and visiting galleries and museums as attentive, perceptive viewers. During students’ time at BU, exploration of the arts should foster involvement in the rich cultural life of Boston. Ready access to the city’s vibrant arts communities is one of the distinct advantages of a BU residential education. Early exposure to these resources will encourage a life-long engagement with human expression in the arts.

### *Historical consciousness*

Deliberately or unconsciously, skillfully or not, we are all historians. Whether deciding which business strategy to adopt for the next quarter, which candidate to favor in the next election, or how to manage an intimate relationship, we all interpret the evidence of the past, we all craft historical narratives: we select significant events from a broad universe of evidence, make arguments about cause and effect, and recognize how previous decisions and their consequences shape the options before us. History asks us to think not just across disciplines and across geographic spaces, but also across time. History creates a sense of connection, rootedness—enrollment in an ongoing conversation among and between generations that helps BU graduates understand where they came from, who they are, and where they might be heading.

For above all else, historical consciousness gives people the power to imagine worlds different from their own, to evaluate them, and thus to imagine how to live differently and better. It promotes self-awareness, and enables resilience. History functions for a community or a nation much like memory works for an individual. Without it, people find themselves caged in the narrow confines of their daily lives. They are unable to conceive of other ways to live their lives or to reform their society, unable to judge what the loudest voices around them are saying, or what those in power are doing.

Historical consciousness offers BU graduates a richly vicarious experience, teaching them to move beyond themselves and envision other worlds, to explore the interplay between material circumstances and human character. History is both a science and an art, combining the careful analysis of evidence with compelling storytelling. It also



offers useful education in the curation of content, teaching students how to collect, evaluate, and arrange a variety of sources into persuasive arguments and narratives. All BU graduates should be able to create historical narratives, evaluate interpretations based on historical evidence, and construct historical arguments.

## **2. Scientific and Social Inquiry**

The natural and social sciences examine spheres of knowledge that remain, for the most part, distinct. The former explore the forces governing the physical universe, while the latter examine the interplay of factors driving outcomes in the social world. Yet, both endeavor to frame questions about how the world works. While awakening wonder at the workings of nature and society, scientific and social inquiry also cultivate a passion for the sheer endeavor to know.

Moreover, both scientific and social inquiry share a common approach to the production of new knowledge – an approach grounded in the collection and analysis or interpretation of evidence to test hypotheses and answer questions about the world in which we live.

### *Scientific Inquiry*

Many of the most vexing problems facing future BU graduates, from the global challenge of climate change to intimate decisions about their own health, demand the capacity to evaluate scientific claims, assess the strengths and weaknesses of prevailing theories, and discriminate between conflicting data and conclusions.

Scientific literacy – both a basic understanding of the current state of knowledge in the physical and biological sciences and a grasp of how such knowledge is produced and validated – is essential to responsible citizenship and personal autonomy. Every BU graduate should possess the ability to understand scientific concepts, as well as the skills necessary to formulate working hypotheses, design experimental tests of these hypotheses, and evaluate experimental data. They should develop a broadly informed curiosity about the natural world and about the ways scientists analyze that world.

### *Social Inquiry*

In Book I of *The Politics*, Aristotle famously argued that human beings are by nature political animals. People do not live and work in isolation. Rather, they are embedded in multiple communities of increasing levels of complexity: families; neighborhoods; universities; cities; states; and transnational communities. People do not live, think, grow, and evolve solely as individuals. As a result, most individual choices are significantly influenced by social forces and the social structures in which people act.

All Boston University students will learn how social scientists formulate hypotheses, gather empirical evidence of multiple sorts, and analyze and interpret this evidence to understand how social phenomena operating at multiple levels affect our lives in profound ways. The perspectives and analytical tools gained from this pursuit of social

inquiry will also inform students' personal and ethical growth by illuminating the societal implications of individual actions.

In addition to equipping students with the skills needed to explore and understand the natural and social worlds in which they live, exposure to both scientific and social inquiry is essential to providing BU students the knowledge and analytic skills required for responsible civic engagement and global citizenship.

### **3. Quantitative Reasoning**

The contemporary world demands quantitative reasoning. It daily asks educated persons to evaluate evidence and arguments, to assess risks, maximize returns, understand averages, evaluate change, and interpret graphical displays and statistical models. Whether reading the newspaper, selecting a phone plan, applying for a mortgage, choosing among treatment options, assessing the performance of public officials, or competing for jobs, students need quantitative skills. BU graduates require both numeracy—grounding in the basic principles of computational disciplines like mathematics, statistics, probability, and computer science—and applied quantitative skills, including the capacity to analyze data and reason quantitatively in relation to complex, real world problems and questions. Graduates need to judge the strengths and limitations of arguments and evidence, distinguish between appropriate use and misuse of data, understand mathematical nuances, and avoid common misunderstandings and fallacies.

All BU students, regardless of their majors, must be prepared for an increasingly information-based society. They require skills and confidence to approach problems systematically and logically across a variety of settings. They must use systems thinking approaches – understanding interdependent, dynamic patterns and structures in devising approaches to complex, sometimes open-ended problems. Students need to think in new ways, and this thinking must start while they are at BU where such skills are essential for courses, projects, and programs. Since daily life and nearly all careers today and projected into the future require reasoning with quantitative information, developing a sophisticated ability to reason quantitatively is a pre-requisite for personal self-sufficiency, responsible citizenship, and success in professional life.

### **4. Diversity, Civic Engagement, and Global Citizenship**

Unusual among the great research universities of the United States, Boston University's commitments to inclusion, to engagement with diverse peoples and cultures around the world and within the local community, and to struggles for social justice stretch back to the university's origins. BU's founders envisioned an institution that fostered opportunity for people of every race and religion and for both sexes. It early on recruited students from around the globe and sent its alumni to every corner of the earth. Well ahead of his time, BU's inaugural president, William Fairfield Warren, explained that, "the doctrine that a university should exist for the benefit of a single class or sex will soon belong to the realm of pedagogical paleontology." These founding principles

imprinted BU from the start with concern for comparative and cross-cultural studies, for educating global citizens, and for encouraging civic engagement.

Those traditions remain a hallmark of undergraduate education at BU, but the university must build on that history to prepare students for productive, meaningful lives in a globally networked world made up of complex, diverse communities. BU graduates must be equipped for their lifelong obligation to recognize and combat individual and institutional prejudice and intolerance, and to foster functioning, supportive communities of diverse individuals in all aspects of their lives. Both in the US and around the world, certain categories of difference remain particularly potent, including race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, religion, and social class. To thrive in contemporary workplaces where employers demand that all students should have experience working with diverse others, and to engage effectively in the civic life of societies that must wrestle with the challenges of prejudice and inequality, all undergraduates must possess the capacity to live, work, and study with people whose experiences and perspectives differ from their own. They need the open-mindedness and knowledge to recognize, understand and value differences, and the practical skills to conduct conversations about and across these differences, which can include differences in language.

The University-Wide General Education Program presupposes that awareness of the relationship between individual responsibility and a variety of communities promotes the common good. Engagement in communities includes civic responsibility, ethical reflection on relational values, service to neighborhoods, cities and country, and commitment to a sustainable planet. Participation in community requires individual self-knowledge and self-awareness, both conscious and unconscious, knowledge of others and their perspectives, and an ability to balance personal desire or need with the good of a community.

Because the ability to think critically about human difference, to engage thoughtfully with diverse communities of people, to understand and create functioning communities, and to live the life of an engaged citizen of the world has such broad applications across the spheres in which BU graduates will live and work, education about diversity is threaded through many core areas in the BU Hub. In addition, the proposed general education program includes three explicit requirements to focus the development of this set of essential capacities: “The Individual in Community,” “Global Citizenship and Intercultural Literacy,” and “Ethical Reasoning.”

### *The Individual in Community*

Over a lifetime, individuals move in and out of multiple communities that range from the micro level of the family, to neighborhoods and cities, to professional and other organizations (which might be international), to larger units such as the nation and even the world. These communities may be defined by, among other things, race, ethnicity, nationality, relationships, time, location, and beliefs. Always these communities will be delineated by both commonality and difference.

Because of its diversity, range of schools and academic programs, and location in a city challenged by a long history of racial injustice to create an integrated community, Boston University provides a superb environment for students to cultivate individual responsibility toward multiple communities, and to experience and learn to work as members of diverse communities. We build on our historic tradition of community leadership that includes the civil rights movement, service organizations such as Goodwill Industries, the Peace Corps and NGOs, and movements for humanitarian and social well-being.

All Boston University graduates should understand the particular circumstances that have led some societies to thrive and others not. They should have reflected deeply about their own relationships to the various communities in which they participate and their responsibilities and obligations to them.

### *Global Citizenship and Intercultural Literacy*

In a world interlinked socially, economically, and politically, an ability to work across cultures and to move from one culture to another competently is essential. With over 100 study abroad programs in 36 cities on 6 continents, with an almost unmatched range of options for foreign language study, and with its rich diversity of international undergraduates (about 23%), Boston University already attracts students who are internationally-aware or wish to become more so. We offer extensive resources to help students become more inter-culturally literate and globally competent, including an extraordinary range of language programs in 25 foreign languages as well as American Sign Language, and a broad array of offerings in the arts and literatures, cultures, societies, and public health and development issues of almost every part of the world (including, of course, the United States). In addition to the opportunities provided by resources abroad, Boston's neighborhoods can and do serve these offerings as a microcosm of the world.

By drawing on these advantages, BU can become known for its world-wise graduates distinguished by their:

1. Ability to orient themselves when outside their cultural comfort zone (abroad, in a foreign-language context, in an unfamiliar neighborhood of Boston, etc.);
2. Sensitivity toward and comfort with people from backgrounds different from their own (national, religious, ethnic, socioeconomic, etc.);
3. Awareness of their own sociocultural background (and the factors that have structured it) and openness to discussing it with others.

### *Ethical Reasoning*

What should people care about? How should they behave in their personal, civic, and professional lives? Do laws have a moral basis? These are fundamentally ethical questions. Learning to grapple competently with such questions is a core purpose of higher education. It is a central component of citizenship and critical to helping students

see themselves as not just individuals, but also parts of larger communities and custodians of the earth.

As part of their ethical education, students should engage competing concepts of what constitutes the good life, without foregoing the challenge of coming to reasoned conclusions about what is just and what is fair, about the rights and obligations of citizens, and about their duties to themselves and others. Ethical reasoning might be thought of as an extension of the “virtue” William Fairfield Warren pledged BU to promote at its founding; it is part of Boston University’s distinguishing tradition of social justice.

Engaging ethical questions also presents an opportunity to foster global competency and cultural humility by encouraging students to grapple to some extent with ethical systems that are very different from their own. All BU graduates should learn to wrestle with ethical issues in all spheres of personal, professional, and civil life.

## **5. Communication**

All BU students should be able to articulate facts and ideas, build persuasive arguments, and express themselves with precision, elegance, and power. To thrive in the contemporary world, they need to communicate effectively orally, in writing, and in the digital multimedia environment. These are separate skills; they use different media and affect audiences in different ways. None can replace the other. We believe students need to understand and acquire fluency (not just literacy) in all three. By becoming fluent in interpreting and analyzing such communication and also producing it, students can serve their own future personal, civic, and professional goals as well as become more savvy about the oral, written and multimedia materials they consume.

Through dedicated study of written, oral, and digital multimedia communication, all BU students should develop the abilities to craft substantive and balanced arguments, to write clear and compelling prose, to explain complex ideas, to communicate as a professional, and to communicate effectively not only with words, but also with sound and images in a digital environment.

### *Writing*

Writing remains the foundation, the most important form of expression that BU undergraduates must develop. In the academy and in almost every professional setting, BU graduates must be able to express their ideas in clear, coherent prose. Effective writing demands the honing of skills, but it also cultivates a way of thinking, a set of tools for evaluating evidence, constructing arguments, and generating creative ideas. As the historian Lynn Hunt explained, “writing is not the transcription of thoughts already consciously present in my mind. Writing is a magical and mysterious process that makes it possible to think differently.”

All BU undergraduates should be able to compose clear and persuasive arguments. They should be able to articulate their ideas with both rigor and grace, and they should understand how best to engage both expert, discipline-specific audiences and broader reading publics.

### *Oral Communication*

In his treatise on oratory, the Roman rhetorician Quintilian defined his subject as “the science of speaking well.” That characterization at once asserted that effective oral communication is an object of study—skills and knowledge that students must learn and practice—and that public speaking serves an essentially civic function. It represents not idle reflection, but a means of participating in collective debate and decision-making. Upon completion of their general education program, BU students should be able to communicate information in a clear and coherent formal oral presentation and to make use of a range of disciplinary-appropriate informal oratory. As with writing, effective oral communicators should prepare remarks with an awareness of their purpose and their audience.

### *Digital/Multimedia Expression*

Communication through means other than words—whether spoken or written—requires a distinct set of skills. In a world where messages are routinely conveyed through audio-visual media, BU students need to develop an understanding of the role and impact of color, composition, rhythm, and acoustics that matches their mastery of verbal syntax and rhetoric. Today, in addition to live performances and installations, BU graduates receive information and experience the world through websites, videos, and podcasts. They must be able to do more than consume and appreciate these and other forms of digital expression. In any field, whether academic, artistic or professional, our alumni will benefit from having achieved fluency in these media.

But being educated and articulate requires more than merely possessing skills in multimedia communication; students must also be able to discern which method best conveys their ideas and feelings. Words are uniquely suited to express Isabel Archer's musings about her troubled marriage in Henry James' *The Portrait of a Lady*. The cello is the perfect instrument for raising the hair on the back of the listener's neck when it plunges to a low E at the opening of Edward Elgar's concerto. Animation and montage are ideal for capturing the scope of the universe in Charles and Ray Eames' film, *Powers of Ten*. Eloquence in today's world requires not simply knowing how to use the tools of communication, but knowing which tool will best do the job.

## **6. Intellectual Toolkit**

Some basic skills are so fundamental to the full development of the capacities in the BU Hub and to lifelong wellbeing that they constitute a toolkit for life and work at BU and after. These are “how to’s” for thinking and living that, exercised often, become enduring habits. In a variety of contexts in and out of the classroom, students will be

taught these skills explicitly. The development of one or more of these skills will be a feature of all courses and co-curricular activities in the BU Hub.

### *Critical Thinking*

An ability to think critically—to identify and question assumptions, to formulate, explore and test propositions, to recognize the difference between valid and invalid forms of argument, to consider and weigh evidence before accepting an opinion or drawing a conclusion—is the fundamental characteristic of an educated person. It is the first capacity most people list when asked about the essential components of a college education. Critical thinking is required for just, civil society and governance, prized by employers, and essential for the growth of wisdom.

Defined by Francis Bacon in 1605, “critical thinking is a desire to seek, patience to doubt, fondness to meditate, slowness to assert, readiness to consider, carefulness to dispose and set in order; and hatred for every kind of imposture.”<sup>7</sup> All BU undergraduates should learn the habits of mind that characterize critical thinking, develop the self-discipline it requires, and practice it often, in varied contexts, across their education.

### *Research and Information literacy*

As a research university, BU is committed to the conviction that scholarly research—the process of posing problems, designing effective investigative strategies, collecting and evaluating information, drawing conclusions, and presenting findings—is central to university education. Knowledge creation and dissemination are crucial functions of the university, and undergraduates should become members of that community of inquiry.

Navigating the contemporary world with its over-abundance of available information, much of it of dubious reliability, also makes crucial the ability to sort through multiple sources and assess their accuracy, identify the assumptions that underlie them, and understand one’s own biases and predispositions in evaluating evidence. Whether at work, in the voting booth, or making decisions about health care or personal finances, BU graduates require the habit of skepticism toward sources of information and the arguments made on their basis, and the ability and patience to discern the strengths and limitations of those sources.

By learning how new knowledge is created and disseminated, and by conducting or participating in significant original research, BU students will enroll themselves in a community of inquiry with a commitment to the pursuit of knowledge that crosses borders and connects generations. They will also learn how to pose important questions and how to evaluate and weigh evidence. At the same time, they will develop mastery in the way of thinking of a discipline or profession.

---

<sup>7</sup> <http://www.criticalthinking.org//>

### *Teamwork/collaboration*

Collaboration defines the 21<sup>st</sup>- century workplace. Employers report increasing reliance on teams—groups of people with different backgrounds and training who tackle projects jointly—and they identify the ability to collaborate with diverse others as an essential skill for almost every position.

At the same time, abundant research makes clear that innovation springs from this kind of collaboration—the collective efforts of radically interdisciplinary teams. Training in and practical experience of teamwork teaches the process of innovation, promotes original thinking, and develops the ability to work with and learn from people from different disciplines and backgrounds. Collaboration fosters knowledge of one’s own strengths and appreciation for those of others.

Teamwork also provides opportunities to develop the complex skills of leadership, including the ability to know when and how to step back and let others lead, and when to take the lead oneself.

In an increasingly integrated world, civic life also calls more and more for the ability to collaborate with diverse others. The ability to generate varied ideas, build consensus, make good on the promise of pooled strengths, compromise for the good of a broader purpose, all are necessary for life in a community.

BU graduates should know the characteristics of a good team and the techniques of working successfully with a team, and have had significant experience collaborating with a diverse group.

### *Creativity/innovation*

An ability to think in new ways, imagine new possibilities, make new things, and solve problems is crucial for addressing the profound, sometimes existential, questions of personal, professional and civic life. From knitting a hat to composing a new tune to engineering a carbon-neutral car, creative activity is a source of deep human satisfaction and common good. Creativity can be pursued individually as well as collaboratively. The process of creativity—moving from need or desire to design to draft to redesign to execution—can be learned. It is a practical skill fundamental to all academic disciplines and can be intentionally fostered in any field of study.

As less-creative, low-wage jobs are outsourced or made redundant by technology, an ability to generate and pursue novel ideas is quickly becoming a pre-requisite for entry into the workforce. If collaboration defines the 21<sup>st</sup>-century workforce, it does so because creativity and its more applied offspring, innovation, are its goal. “Creativity and innovation have become essential to generating the jobs that we will need in order to sustain our standard of living over the coming decades,” writes Deborah L. Wince-Smith, president of the Council on Competitiveness.<sup>8</sup> Her call for colleges and universities to

---

<sup>8</sup> <http://www.aacu.org/publications-research/periodicals/creativity-imperative-national-perspective>



“play a critical role in this national endeavor as centers for a creative liberal education” was repeated in the Association of American Colleges and University’s survey of employers, 95% of whom “say they give hiring preference to college graduates with skills that will enable them to contribute to innovation in the workplace,” and 92% of whom “agree that ‘innovation is essential’ to their organization’s continued success.”<sup>9</sup>

The arts, whose studio and workshop pedagogies are founded on conscious, well-practiced methods of developing creative potential, have a special role to play both in developing the creativity of BU students. With a vibrant College of Fine Arts, the Provost’s Arts Initiative, programs in film production, playwriting and creative writing, a theatre dedicated to producing original work, and partnerships with Boston arts organizations, BU is well-poised to leverage its strength in the arts to produce graduates known for their creativity.

BU graduates should understand the process of creativity, should have personal experience of taking risk, failing and trying again, and should have developed the patience and persistence that enables creativity to come ultimately to fruition.

### *Life Skills*

Conversations with faculty, parents, and students revealed the value of, and the need for, courses or workshops on life skills offered in a coherent way at the right time. Students repeatedly discussed their desire for a two-part life skills offering: one in freshman year for the life skills needed for intellectual and social life in college; one in the senior year for those needed as students go forth into the world. Parents and faculty repeatedly asserted that their students needed such courses.

First-year courses might be developed by schools and colleges along the lines of the popular, successful CAS FY 101 course to introduce students to resources and strategies for academic and social success at BU by: providing an overview of US higher education, its history, philosophy and norms; providing wellness education; developing ways of connecting with others within a diverse community; and encouraging students to think about what they want out of a college education and how they might plan to get that. Such a course would also provide the well-documented benefits of common first-year experiences that build a sense of small community within the larger university, give students an immediate sense of belonging, and provide a basic grounding for navigating college.

The senior year course, which could follow a similar model, would focus on professional skills (etiquette, interview techniques, e.g.), basic personal finance, the place of work in life, civic responsibility, work-life balance, and sustaining life-long learning. Schools and colleges might design such courses in collaboration with each other and with other units around campus such as the Center for Career Development, the Howard Thurman Center, Mugar Library, Disability Services, and Student Health Services.

---

<sup>9</sup> <http://www.aacu.org/leap/presidentstrust/compact/2013SurveySummary>

## Possible Pathways

By stressing the acquisition of knowledge, skills and habits of mind across all four years, the University-Wide General Education Program encourages multiple pathways to acquiring the core capacities. The core areas will be most fully developed when students have repeated opportunities over time to hone their skills, consolidate, build on and interrelate knowledge, and exercise desirable habits of mind. The core capacities of the BU Hub overlap and are mutually reinforcing as the development of one calls for, or creates the opportunity for, the exercise of another.

Students will develop some capacities in the conventional manner, by taking specially designed general education courses, but will develop others by taking courses within their major, pursuing research under the supervision of faculty members, participating in a living-learning community such as Kilachand Honors College or Earth House, doing a supervised internship, or participating in the BU Cross-College Challenge described in the next section. Other possible pathways are listed below.

Much learning in college happens outside of class—in the residence halls, in student clubs, at university-sponsored events--and the Task Force recommends that BU take this opportunity to develop these particular features of a residential education by fostering even closer collaboration between student affairs and academic affairs. The implementation of General Education gives BU an opportunity to leverage the existing good relations between academic and student affairs to align coursework and student affairs programming as well as faculty-led co-curricular activities to enhance significantly our students' educational experience and their learning. This is a powerful combination that BU is well-poised to exploit further.

The Task Force recommends that students be required to take coursework in all areas of the BU Hub, with that coursework reinforced by multiple opportunities to develop the capacities through intentionally designed co-curricular activities. Co-curricular activities can be associated with a course or a program, but need not be. They do, however, need to be meaningfully related to the curriculum. The learning outcomes for the core areas in the BU Hub would pertain to both curricular and co-curricular experiences.

The BU Hub must include a minimum of 40 credits of coursework, as required for institutional accreditation (see the note on NEASC below). Courses may develop multiple capacities in the BU Hub, but no course can sufficiently develop more than two for the purposes of General Education.

Pathways could include:

- Existing courses
- Redesigned courses
- New courses

- The Writing Program which, in addition to continuing to provide basic writing instruction and oral presentation skills to all students, could participate in offering additional training in oral communication and digital, multimedia communication
- Boston-based courses that take students out into the city
- Study Abroad
- An integrated set of disciplinary or interdisciplinary courses that develop multiple capacities in the BU Hub, such as the Core Curriculum or the CGS program
- Newly-designed clusters of courses that approach a problem or question from multiple perspectives, along the lines of such clusters at the University of Miami and the University of Rochester
- Faculty-supervised co-curricular activities such as field trips, lectures, concerts, and exhibitions
- Supervised community-based research and service projects
- Experiential-learning courses or modules in courses
- Supervised internships such as the Yawkey Non-Profit Internship Program or the CAS On-campus Internship Program
- The Undergraduate Research Opportunities Program (UROP)—non-credit, faculty-supervised research, scholarship and creative activity supported by a stipend
- Capstone courses in the major and other culminating experiences that require substantial independent work pursued individually or in groups, such as CAS Honors in the Major and the Senior Design project in Engineering
- Existing living-learning communities that combine common coursework, co-curricular activities, and the experience of living in a small community, such as Kilachand Honors College, Earth House, and Core Curriculum
- New or newly-designed living-learning communities, which could include language houses, a writer's house, the Common Ground House
- Programs developed by BU's Faculty-in-Residence program
- Arts Passport, or other program sponsored by the Arts Initiative, that takes students to plays, concerts, galleries, readings and other experiences of the arts
- ePortfolios of student work and their reflection on it

### **The BU Hub Signature: The BU Cross-College Challenge**

As part of its charge to identify what is distinctive about a *Boston University* undergraduate education—what aspects of BU's unique character and strengths should identify the University-Wide General Education program as, in student parlance, "*so BU*"—the Task Force, advised by students and faculty, proposes a keystone general education experience for all undergraduates that will integrate many of the core areas of knowledge, skills, and habits of mind.

Completed at some point during the junior or senior year (we propose piloting various short-term and semester-long models), the BU Cross-College Challenge, will afford every BU undergraduate a substantial teamwork experience and the opportunity to collaborate with classmates from across the university. Composed of students from multiple schools and colleges, teams of six to eight undergraduates will address contemporary issues and enduring human questions. Each team will identify a significant problem and produce a tangible product (it may be a physical object, such as a machine or a circuit board, but it might also be a film, an exhibition, a website, a work of art, an essay).

The BU Cross-College Challenge, the BU Hub's signature program, would not only enhance the university's objective of integrating the liberal arts with the professions and answer student demand for more contact with their colleagues in schools and colleges outside their own, it would provide students with crucial preparation for the 21<sup>st</sup> century workplace. Moreover, training for and practical experience of teamwork teaches the process of innovation, promotes resourcefulness, and develops the ability to work with and learn from people from different disciplines. The Challenge would provide opportunities for faculty as well as students to work together. The Challenge would be graded, both individually and for the group, and will be for credit.

The Task Force can imagine a number of ways this ambitious program might be developed and implemented. Three members of the Task Force on General Education are currently involved with a Davis Foundation-funded project through the Association of American Colleges and Universities (AAC&U) to develop a pilot for the BU Cross-College Challenge.

The Task Force proposes a three-year piloting and phase-in process to test the concept, to experiment with a variety of ways of implementation, and to gain experience running such a program on a large scale. In an initial year, a pilot would run as a selective program to which students apply. If the pilot proves successful, the second year would also be by application, but would be open to all interested students. After assessing the results of that experiment, the University might then require the program for all students. Although the Task Force recognizes the ambitious scope of this proposal and the need for careful planning, it strongly believes that a significant collaborative experience, team-based and radically interdisciplinary in character, should become an essential feature of every BU undergraduate's education. Ample research strongly correlates such "signature work" for all students—rather than for a select minority of the student body—with high levels of student engagement and integrative learning. The evidence from universities with mature and successful general education programs, as well as from employer surveys, also signals the value for all students of experience working with people of entirely different backgrounds and training. While highly successful programs like senior design project in the College of Engineering and the Questrom "core" advance these commitments to collaborative work and will remain valuable components of their respective college's curricula, they should not substitute for a truly cross-college, radically interdisciplinary experience like the BU Cross College Challenge.

### **Further Thoughts and Recommendations**

In the course of its work, the Task Force on General Education considered a variety of issues that it decided were more appropriately addressed by the task force charged with developing an implementation plan. We pass them on here, with some thoughts and recommendations, for consideration by the implementation committee.

*Learning Outcomes:* The Task Force recommends that subcommittees of faculty from across the university be named to develop the learning outcomes for each of the areas in the BU Hub. Those outcomes would become the basis on which courses will be

considered for inclusion in the General Education program. The subcommittees could be part of the proposed governance structure for General Education, or subcommittees of the implementation committee. To assure that the interests of the students are best served, multiple perspectives should be involved in the development of the learning outcomes: the subcommittees should be drawn broadly from the schools and colleges, and should include both experts within disciplines (where appropriate) and non-experts.

*AP and IB credit:* How will AP and IB credit feature in students' development of the core capacities of the BU Hub? This question will be important to students admitted for Fall 2017 as they are considering in April whether to come to BU. The Task Force suggests that, as one of its first actions, the implementation committee appoint a subcommittee to review the AP policy in light of the new General Education program. Faculty have long been eager to undertake such a reconsideration of AP. Close collaboration with the schools and colleges, as well as the Office of Admissions, will be essential.

*Transfer Credit:* How will transfer credit for General Education be evaluated? Are there areas of the BU Hub that can be developed only at BU? Transfer students entering in Fall 2017 will need to know the answers well in advance. The Task Force suggests that the implementation committee confer among itself and meet early in its work with the Office of Admissions and the Office of the University Registrar (which is responsible for transfer credit) to develop reasonable guidelines that both enable transfer students to build on their prior education and assure the integrity of the BU degree. Consultation with the schools and colleges will be essential.

*Active learning and high-impact practices:* Abundant research shows that student-centered, active-learning pedagogical practices enhance student engagement, improve learning outcomes, and contribute to higher retention and graduation rates. Many of the so-called High Impact Educational Practices (<https://www.aacu.org/leap/hips>), which embody these pedagogical practices, are listed above among the "Possible Pathways." Practices such as experiential or service learning can be incorporated into courses, as can other kinds of active-learning techniques. Some high-impact practices involve the development of new kinds of programs (e.g., living-learning communities); BU already has others that are models of their kind, such as the Undergraduate Research Opportunity Program (UROP) and CAS's First Year Service Opportunity Program (FYSOP). The Task Force strongly urges the implementation committee to take the occasion the new General Education offers to assure that all courses in the Gen Ed program employ pedagogical strategies proven to be effective. It also suggests that the implementation committee consider how programs such as the Faculty-in-Residence Program and Specialty Houses could be enhanced and developed as exciting, effective pathways for Gen Ed. These two steps—proven pedagogical practices in courses, the development of high-impact programs—could advance effective teaching and student learning at BU in ways that would show in retention and graduation rates and improved student satisfaction. Essential support for faculty to develop active learning in their courses can be provided by the new Center for Teaching and Learning, which is poised to assume an active role in implementing General Education.

*The Liberal Arts with the Professions:* While this report emphasizes BU's unusual ability to "introduce undergraduates to the realities, possibilities, and promise of interconnections between the professional schools and the liberal arts" as a defining feature of an undergraduate education, we have not put forward a recommendation for how that should be accomplished. By virtue of the BU Hub, students in the professional schools will study the liberal arts and sciences. Is that enough, or is an explicit opportunity to *integrate* the liberal arts and the professions essential? And what about nearly half of our undergraduates, those in the liberal arts and sciences majors? How do they get an experience with the professions? Is participating in the BU Cross-College Challenge enough? We know that students in the College of Arts and Sciences want to take courses in the professional schools, and many do—but a significant number of courses are closed to them for a variety of reasons. Should we be opening more courses in the professional schools for students to take as they'd like, but make no requirement? Or should we provide a menu of professional opportunities, which could include courses, but also internships and other professional experiences, and require that all students participate in at least one? These are questions the implementation committee may want to consider.

*Advising for The BU Hub:* The pull of the default "check-the-box" general education is powerful. Informed, collaborative, and firm academic advising will be crucial in developing the framing narrative for students around the BU Hub. Advisors will need to help students understand the rationale for each of the areas in the BU Hub and to guide them in meaningful choices of pathways to develop the six capacities in and out of the classroom. The Task Force recommends that a blueprint for General Education advising (including training and support for advisors) be part of the Task Force's implementation plan.

*Assessment:* The BU Hub is the first University-Wide General Education Program for BU, but it won't be the last: the implementation plan will undoubtedly establish a process of regular assessment, discussion and revision. In the course of its consultation and discussion, the Task Force considered the possibility of a BU Hub Portfolio as a way for students to document and reflect on their learning. For assessment, portfolios would provide direct evidence of learning outcomes, a body of work for each student from which a sample for assessment could easily be drawn. For students, portfolios could be mined for samples of work for job applications and graduate schools. Perhaps most importantly, as students select work for the portfolio to demonstrate their development in the six areas of the BU Hub, they would be obliged to think about the areas, to reflect on what they've learned, and how they've developed. Formally or informally, portfolios could provide the means for students to draw connections among their educational experiences, to engage in the integrative learning that helps them make sense of their educations and prepares them to apply what they learned to new situations. Whether such portfolios are practically feasible for BU is an open question. The Task Force suggests that the implementation committee consider the benefits of portfolios and assess and weigh their feasibility.

## A Note on NEASC Accreditation

The Task Force's work was generally informed by the minimum requirements of Boston University's institutional accreditation by the New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC), the consortium that sets the standards for educational quality among its members.

To meet those standards, Boston University must require a “coherent and substantive” general education program **“of at least the equivalent of 40 semester hours.”** The program must assure that all students acquire breadth of knowledge across the arts and humanities, the sciences and mathematics and the social sciences. Graduates must demonstrate “competence in written and oral communication in English,” “the ability for scientific and quantitative reasoning, for critical analysis and logical thinking,” the “capability for continuing learning, including the skills of information literacy,” “knowledge and understanding of scientific, historical and social phenomena” and “knowledge and appreciation of the aesthetic and ethical dimensions of humankind.” For more details, see:

[https://cihe.neasc.org/standard-policies/standards-accreditation/standards-effective-july-1-2011#standard\\_four](https://cihe.neasc.org/standard-policies/standards-accreditation/standards-effective-july-1-2011#standard_four)

## Background: The Work of the Task Force on General Education

As part of a two-phase process, the Task Force on General Education was charged with developing “a set of core areas or competencies—knowledge, skills, and habits of mind—that will equip Boston University graduates to thrive in their personal, professional, and civic lives in an increasingly interconnected world.” These core areas or habits of mind would become the basis for the new University-Wide General Education Program. To identify these core areas, Provost Jean Morrison asked the Task Force to consult with faculty and relevant staff, explore the successful general education programs at other top research universities, and evaluate the literature on general education. For a list of Task Force members, the complete text of the charge, and the context for university-wide general education at BU, please visit <http://www.bu.edu/gened>. A second Task Force will develop a plan for implementation.

The Task Force was announced in November 2014, began meeting in December, and convened weekly during the Spring 2015 semester. The Task Force spent the spring brainstorming, informing itself about current requirements in BU's undergraduate schools/colleges, exploring interesting pedagogical and curricular programs currently flourishing at BU, and learning about and consulting with other universities. The Task Force also undertook a first round of consultations with over 250 members of the BU community, including more than 15 idea-gathering meetings with student and parent groups, the faculty leadership of all BU's undergraduate schools and colleges, the Board of Trustees, and the Board of Overseers. The Task Force ended the spring with a day-long retreat to consider what it had heard and learned and spent Summer 2015 drafting a working paper that encapsulated its initial ideas for university-wide general education.

The Task Force posted the working paper in October 2015 and dedicated the Fall semester to extensive consultation with the university community. Task Force members attended thirty-six separate meetings with a wide variety of stakeholders, including the faculties of all 17 schools and colleges, student groups, the Parent Leadership Council, alumni, and staff. Over a thousand people attended meetings over a four-month period. The Task Force also gathered input through the comments page on its website, <http://www.bu.edu/gened/>. The Task Force met in late December, January and February to consider the feedback, hold additional consultations, rethink its ideas, and write its final report to the provost.

“The BU Hub: A Vision for University-Wide General Education at Boston University” results from this 15-month process. A second task force will develop a plan for implementation, which will take about a year.



## **Task Force on General Education Membership**

### **Co-Chairs:**

**Elizabeth Loizeaux**, Associate Provost for Undergraduate Affairs and Professor, Department of English, College of Arts & Sciences

**Bruce Schulman**, William E. Huntington Professor, Department of History, College of Arts & Sciences

### **Members:**

**Daniel Dahlstrom**, John R. Silber Professor, Department of Philosophy, College of Arts & Sciences

**John Fawell**, Professor of Humanities, College of General Studies

**Samantha Kaplan**, Assistant Professor of Obstetrics & Gynecology and Assistant Dean for Diversity & Multicultural Affairs, School of Medicine

**Dorothy Kelly**, Professor and Associate Chair, Department of Romance Studies, College of Arts & Sciences

**Douglas Kriner**, Associate Professor, Department of Political Science, College of Arts & Sciences

**Margaret Litvin**, Associate Professor, Department of Modern Languages & Comparative Literature, College of Arts & Sciences

**Charles Merzbacher**, Associate Professor, Department of Film and Television, College of Communication

**Dana Robert**, Truman Collins Professor of World Christianity and History of Mission and Director of the Center for Global Christianity and Mission, School of Theology

**Michael Salinger**, Jacqueline J. and Arthur S. Bahr Professor in Management, Markets, Public Policy and Law, School of Management

**Lisa Sullivan**, Professor, Department of Biostatistics, School of Public Health

**Tom Tullius**, Professor, Department of Chemistry, College of Arts and Sciences

**Alice White**, Professor and Chair, Department of Mechanical Engineering, College of Engineering

### **Staff:**

**PJ Jorgensen**, Programs and Events Specialist, Office of the Provost