

# **Proposal for Revised Core Curriculum**

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## PREFACE

The Interdisciplinary Studies Committee recommends that the Ouachita Baptist University Faculty adopt the Core Curriculum framework presented in this document. This recommendation comes after two years of research, analysis, planning, discussion, and revision. We've invited and received generous input from across campus, including over 60 faculty and staff directly involved in our committee-organized design teams and subcommittees, as well as many more who offered useful critiques and suggestions along the way. We've attempted to honor the good work of our colleagues by constructing a framework that reflects their diverse insights and interests. If adopted, the committee will continue working with faculty and staff over the next year to prepare for launching the new program in the Fall 2014 semester.

As you review this proposal, we encourage you to consider several reasons we believe this approach to general education is worthy of your support. First, the framework is built on a solid foundation, specifically the statements of "Vision, Mission and Values" and "Liberal Arts Education" that articulate Ouachita's distinctive mission and enduring commitments. We haven't reproduced those documents here, but the Preliminary Report we distributed in February presented them as integral to our Goals for Student Learning and our evolving curricular framework.

This proposal also takes seriously student feedback and assessment data we've collected over the last few years and advances our efforts to base our curricular and pedagogical decisions on clear outcomes and measurable objectives. At the same time, it recognizes that data alone is no substitute for the wisdom of experienced faculty or the fresh perspectives of our newer colleagues, both of which have strengthened this proposal.

At the outset of this process, we identified the following goals: to reduce hours required in the current CORE program, create greater flexibility for students, and extend opportunities for experiential learning while maintaining the liberal arts foundation of the Ouachita educational experience. We believe the curricular model outlined here accomplishes these goals and advances a key initiative in our university strategic plan: "Refocus the academic program to effectively blend the liberal arts, professional education, and experiential learning." These changes will help us make the case that at Ouachita, learning in the liberal arts tradition effectively prepares students for the challenges of life and work beyond university.

Finally, this framework provides a mechanism for orderly change, allowing us to respond more nimbly to future needs and challenges and to refine our educational programs as we see more clearly the relationship between curriculum design and student learning.

### Notes on the Final Draft

Much of this document will be familiar to those who have read earlier versions, especially [the draft we circulated on April 9<sup>th</sup>](#). After considering feedback at the April Faculty Forum and in subsequent conversations, this final version of our proposal includes the following major additions and changes:

- Students with an ACT math score of 22 or below must choose between the two math courses in the [Analytic and Quantitative Reasoning Menu](#). The rationale for this stipulation is that students with weak math skills would likely find it difficult to succeed in required science classes. We also removed *Programming I* as a projected course for this menu.
- A new section explains the [process and timetable for implementing](#) the new curriculum.
- [Appendix C](#) elaborates on the rationale for the Arts Series and suggests some possible ways to manage the requirement.

A record of the committee's work over the last two years, including presentations, resources, and all major reports and drafts, is available on the M drive in the [Interdisciplinary Studies Committee folder](#).

## LEARNING GOALS FOR OUACHITA'S EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS

Through all its educational programs—curricular and co-curricular, classroom and experiential—Ouachita promotes the following goals for student learning:

1. Intellectual and applied skills that promote competency and lifelong learning, including articulate communication; critical and creative thinking; analytical and quantitative reasoning; scientific reasoning; and information literacy.
2. Engagement with content and methods of the major domains of knowledge.
3. Heightened awareness of personal and social responsibility, including the ability and inclination to practice civic engagement, ethical reasoning, personal integrity, stewardship, physical well-being, and spiritual growth.
4. Appreciation for cultural diversity and development of intercultural competence for constructive engagement in both local and global contexts.
5. Depth of knowledge and skills in a chosen discipline or combination of disciplines sufficient to provide the foundation for advanced study, professional competence, and meaningful work.
6. Ability to connect learning across disciplines and apply knowledge and skills to solve problems.

These same goals have been endorsed by the Curriculum and Academic Standards Committee, which will recommend them for adoption as university-wide goals. If approved, they will guide the entire educational process at Ouachita. All curricular and co-curricular programs will identify student learning outcomes, ensure that they are clearly aligned with these university goals, develop appropriate assessment measures to document their level of effectiveness, and use the results as the basis for continuous improvement. To assist with the development of assessment plans, [Appendix A](#) (p. 21) subdivides this list of goals into specific outcomes, which are in turn referenced in the course outlines included in this document.

## OVERVIEW OF PROPOSED OUACHITA CURRICULUM

### I. University Core Curriculum 48-49 hours

#### Common Core 24 hours

<i>Foundations</i> (11 hours)	<i>Frameworks</i> (13 hours)
OBU Connections (2)	Composition I (3)
Survey of the Bible (3)	Scientific Inquiry (4)
Interpreting the Bible (3)	Western Civilization in Global Context (3)
Contemporary World (3)	World Literature (3)

#### Flexible Core 23-24 hours

*Analytic and Quantitative Reasoning* (3)  
*Applied Skills* (3)  
*Artistic Engagement* (3)  
*Civic Engagement in America* (3)  
*Intercultural Appreciation and Communication* (6)  
*Physical Well-being* (2-3)  
*Scientific Connections* (3)

#### Experiential Core 1 hour

*Arts Series* (1)  
*Chapel* (non-credit requirement)  
*OBU Passport* (non-credit requirement)

### II. Writing and Oral Communication Program

**Writing Instruction Courses:** Composition I or satisfactory score on AP/CLEP/IB exam, plus one of the following: a writing-instruction course in the major, *Composition II*, *Intermediate Composition* (possible new course), *Advanced Composition*, *Technical & Professional Writing*.

**Writing Practice Courses:** Designated courses in the university core curriculum and in the major that focus on “writing to learn” strategies and reinforce skills gained in writing-instruction courses.

**Oral Communication Courses:** *Fundamentals of Public Speaking* is an option in the Flexible Core’s Applied Skills menu. At least one course designated in each major will include opportunities for students to practice oral communication skills.

### III. Intensive Study in Selected Fields (Majors, Minors, Emphases)

Schools and departments will review and revise their curricula as needed to ensure alignment with university-wide goals for student learning and a new Core Curriculum.

### IV. The Senior Capstone Course

A course in the school or department that emphasizes integrative learning and draws on both discipline-based content and the broader knowledge and skills cultivated in the university core.

## I. UNIVERSITY CORE CURRICULUM

### Common Core

The Common Core provides a shared intellectual experience for incoming students, introduces them to Ouachita's distinctive mission, and promotes skills and intellectual frameworks essential for further study. Courses under the "Foundations" heading encourage students to develop mature Christian perspectives on faith, explore learning in the liberal arts tradition, acquire scholarly-informed understanding of the Bible, and recognize the diversity of the contemporary world. Courses listed under the "Frameworks" heading develop the intellectual tools necessary for academic success and lifelong learning, including effective written communication, scientific reasoning, chronological frameworks, and literary perspectives that reflect the diversity of human creativity and cultural expression.

#### Foundations (4 courses)

Courses in this category must be taken at OBU, with the limited exception of approved Bible courses accepted in transfer from other Christian colleges and universities.

Course	Learning Outcomes (see <a href="#">Appendix A</a> )
<i>OBU Connections</i>	1.a.i., 1.a.ii., 1.b., 1.g., 3.c., 3.f., 6.a.
<i>Survey of the Bible</i>	1.b., 3.b., 3.c., 3.d., 3.f.
<i>Interpreting the Bible</i>	1.a.i., 1.b., 3.b., 3.c., 3.f.
<i>The Contemporary World</i>	1.g., 3.a., 4.a., 4.b., 6.a.

#### Frameworks (4 courses)

Course requirements in this category may be met through AP or CLEP credit or by approved courses taken at other accredited institutions. Furthermore, some exceptions are made based on disciplinary requirements.

Course	Learning Outcomes (see <a href="#">Appendix A</a> )
<i>Composition I</i>	1.a.i., 1.b., 1.c.
<i>Scientific Inquiry</i>	1.b., 1.d., 1.e., 1.f., 2, 6.a.
<i>Western Civilization in Global Context</i>	1.a.i., 1.b., 1.g., 3.a., 4.a., 4.b.
<i>World Literature</i>	1.a.i., 1.b., 1.c., 4.a., 4.b.

All of the courses listed above will have a CORE prefix. The ISC will review and approve revised syllabi, including course descriptions and learning objectives, for all common core courses, prior to launching the proposed new curriculum in Fall 2014. Below is a summary of anticipated changes:

- *OBU Connections* is a major re-structuring of *Introduction to the Liberal Arts*. (See description of the new version of the course on p. 7.)
- *The Contemporary World* will continue with the same structure but with a stronger focus on recent events.
- *Composition I* will be revised to include the process of writing a documented essay.
- *Scientific Inquiry* is a new, interdisciplinary science course proposed by science faculty. (See description of the new version of the course on p. 7.)
- *Western Civilization in Global Context* will include non-western history for comparative purposes.
- *World Literature* will expand the current *Western Letters* course to include non-Western literary texts and will replace the current choice between *Western Letters* and *American Letters*.

## **OBU CONNECTIONS (2 hours)**

(This course is a combination of elements from the current *Introduction to the Liberal Arts* and the academic components of *OBU Experience*.)

### **Purpose and Rationale**

This course will introduce first-year students to higher education in the context of a liberal arts education. Structured in two parts, the course first helps students develop skills and disciplines necessary for academic success and for life beyond college. Students will explore Ouachita's mission as a Christian college in the liberal arts tradition and how it can help them achieve career and personal goals. (GOAL 3)

In the second part of the course, students will rekindle their curiosity and joy in learning through working creatively and collaboratively with peers on an intensive and interdisciplinary study of a topic chosen by the instructor. (GOAL 6)

**Course Description** - This course will include the following components:

#### Elements of Unity

- Common first text or reading packet for part 1 (4-5 weeks)
- Common academic/transition content (academic success, academic integrity, the Christian college, liberal arts)
- Common objectives + similar amounts of variable objectives
- Group Project with Team Presentation requiring Information Literacy Lab
- Common assessment for part 1; appropriate assessment for part 2
- Similar reading components (define minimum/maximum)
- Similar amounts of writing throughout the semester (c. 10 pages)
- Determine a common approach to bonus points

#### Elements of Flexibility

- Professor chooses topic (part 2)
- Professor chooses three+ interdisciplinary perspectives on topic (part 2)
- Professor chooses other reading material (part 2)
- Professor determines variable learning objectives and assessment tools (part 2)
- Professor determines precise character of writing assignments, additional tests, projects and other learning activities to meet variable learning objectives (part 2)

#### Elements of Quality Assurance

- Class size of 20-25 to allow for team approach to learning and faculty mentoring
- Submission of draft syllabus including objectives, readings, assignments
- Included in above, consultation with professors in proposed interdisciplinary areas
- Weekly instructor meetings (for part 1, as needed for part 2)
- Brief post-semester discussion among faculty; faculty members receive comparison of their section's class gpa with overall course gpa
- Periodic review of classes based on assessment data, class reports and student evaluations

### **Learning Objectives**

- Students will recognize the purpose of Christian higher education, including Ouachita's heritage and mission. (3.f.)

- Students will examine the purpose and value of a liberal arts education and interdisciplinary approaches to understanding the world. (6.a.)
- Students will explore their personal goals and vocation in relation to faith, calling and education. (3.c., 3.f.)
- Students will identify and demonstrate skills, disciplines and virtues associated with success in higher education. (1.b., 1.g.)
- Students will develop written and oral communication skills. (1.a.i.& 1.a.ii.)

## **SCIENTIFIC INQUIRY (4 HOURS, INCLUDING LAB)**

### **Purpose and Rationale**

In order to effectively participate in discussions and decisions about many of today's most pressing issues, OBU graduates will need more than a passing familiarity with scientific reasoning. In addition to developing a foundational understanding of scientific principles, students need to be able to apply those principles to other areas of their lives. They must be able to read and understand scientific analysis as presented in the media and in popular scientific literature. They must be able to critically evaluate scientific reporting to identify biases, to evaluate the quality of sources, and to assess the validity of scientific claims. They must be able to intelligently discuss the ethical and political implications of new scientific discoveries.

### **Course Description**

This sophomore-level course will lay the foundations for scientific reasoning by exploring the big ideas in the natural sciences, articulating questions, identifying relationships and modeling data, and utilizing the scientific process to conduct investigations. The course will meet three hours per week in the classroom and two hours per week in the laboratory, earning the students four credit hours. Prerequisite: completion of the Analytic and Quantitative Reasoning requirement.

### **Learning Outcomes**

Learning outcomes for courses in this menu will primarily address the scientific reasoning aspect of goal 1. Students will:

- Demonstrate a breadth of knowledge in key natural science topics (big bang theory, evolution, conservation, energy...) and will use this knowledge to explore connections between science and global issues. (2, 6.a.)
- Use appropriate methods to critique and analyze claims or data. (1.b., 1.d.)
- Identify the relationships between data, conclusions and theories/laws. (1.f.)
- Distinguish evidence-based conclusions from mere opinions. (1.b., 1.d.)
- Students will select and employ the necessary mathematical models to explain data and calculate unknown variables. (1.e.)
- Describe and evaluate connections between nature and humans. (6.a.)
- Articulate scientific questions of their world and formulate testable hypotheses. (1.f.)
- Define the steps in the scientific process, including articulating the basics of experimental design and selecting the appropriate controls for a given experiment. (1.f.)
- Use basic laboratory equipment, demonstrate awareness of specific technologies used to conduct scientific investigations, and evaluate whether a specific technology is used appropriately (1.f.)

## FLEXIBLE CORE

The Flexible Core is organized into menu options that engage students with the content and methods in a broad range of learning domains (Goal 2) while also meeting other student learning outcomes specific to each menu. Skills introduced in the Common Core, such as writing, oral communication, and critical thinking, are further developed in these courses as well. The menu descriptions below include a list of projected course options. While these lists represent the committee's best judgment based on analysis and feedback to this point, all courses must be reviewed and approved by the ISC in order to be included in the Core Curriculum. This review will ensure that each course clearly advances the learning outcomes assigned to the appropriate menu. Courses included in these menus will be assigned departmental prefixes.

### ANALYTIC AND QUANTITATIVE REASONING (3 HOURS)

#### Purpose and Rationale

A well-educated individual should be able to employ reasoned inquiry to discern truth, to make decisions, and to solve problems. In order to accomplish these goals, one must be able to evaluate information from multiple sources, analyze that information, draw conclusions, and present a well-reasoned argument based on his or her analysis. In our modern society, this process often involves quantitative information and abstract thinking, as well as the ability to apply these methods in novel ways.

#### Menu Description

Courses in this menu should focus on analytic and quantitative reasoning. Courses should be 3 credit hours. At a minimum, each course must have a prerequisite of ability to enroll in a college-level mathematics course. This currently means an ACT Mathematics score of 19 or higher, an SAT Mathematics score of 460 or higher, or a grade of C or higher in either ASKL 1013: Intermediate Algebra or ASKL 1023: Introductory Problem-Solving Skills. Furthermore, students with an ACT of 22 or below must choose one of the mathematics courses, while those with a 23 or above will have the full range of choices in the menu.

#### Learning Outcomes

Learning outcomes for courses in this menu will primarily address goals 1 (critical thinking and quantitative reasoning) and 6 (apply knowledge and skills to solve problems) of Ouachita's educational programs.

Students will:

- Use reasoned analysis, pattern recognition, and abstraction to arrive at general principles and to formulate theoretical and applied models (1.d., 1.e.)
- Apply these principles and models to solve problems and to make decisions (6.b.)
- Distinguish evidence-based conclusions from mere opinions (1.b.)
- Construct and communicate with well-formed arguments (1.a.i., 1.b., 1.d.)
- Interpret, summarize, judge the validity of, and develop reasonable conclusions from claims or data (1.d., 1.e.)

#### Projected Course Options

*Math for the Liberal Arts*

*College Algebra*

*Introduction to Philosophy*

*Logic*

## **APPLIED SKILLS (3 HOURS)**

### **Purpose and Rationale**

Courses in the Applied Skills menu will develop competence in key practical skills that will enable students to live more meaningful and productive lives. (GOAL 1) An appreciation of personal responsibility and integrity in managing the daily activities of living will reduce distractions and afford graduates the freedom to pursue their calling with confidence and fervor. (GOAL 3)

### **Menu Description**

The content of courses in the menu may vary widely, but all should allow for a focus on the development of an essential life-long personal skill. A course that simply includes one or more application-based assignments may not qualify. Instead, courses must be designed around a particular aptitude in order to be considered for inclusion. This requirement is not intended to preclude any particular course structure or topic. Similarly, no restrictions on course level or size are necessary. However, all assignments, class activities, etc. should be centered on developing competence in the stated skill.

### **Learning Outcomes**

Learning outcomes are subdivided into common outcomes and flexible outcomes. All courses in the menu should satisfy all common outcomes. In addition, each course should satisfy all outcomes under either the Analytic or Interpersonal Flexible Outcomes menu.

#### *Common Outcomes*

- 1) Promote competency in a life-long, personal skill. (GOAL 1)
- 2) Promote a heightened awareness of personal responsibility and personal integrity. (GOAL 3)

#### *Flexible Outcomes – Analytic skills*

- 1) Develop applied quantitative skills (1.e.)
- 2) Develop effective stewardship skills (3.d.)

#### *Flexible Outcomes – Interpersonal skills*

- 1) Develop articulate communication skills (1.a.i., 1.a.ii.)
- 2) Develop ethical reasoning skills (3.b.)

### **Projected Course Options**

*Fundamentals of Public Speaking*  
*Personal Finance*

## **ARTISTIC ENGAGEMENT (3 hours)**

### **Purpose and Rationale**

Art can entertain and divert, but it also has a proud cultural history of connecting us with our own humanity. When we encounter a creative work and engage with it, we are interacting with another person and their ideas and emotions. We are experiencing a constructed object or event that was formed by a fellow traveler through human experience. If we remain engaged in the creative contributions of artists, we stay connected with the issues, ideas, and dreams of our communities and our cultures (Goal 4b). These expressive creations come from real human experiences but at the same time are safely apart from our reality so that we can more openly engage in critical responses to the embedded ideas. This separation from reality can help us see, feel and think beyond our narrow personal experiences (Goal 1b). Expressive works provide opportunities for escape, debate, sympathy and contemplation. They encourage us to react, pushing us to respond by trying to better communicate our own feelings and ideas (Goal 1a). Engagement with the Arts helps us re-imagine ourselves and our place in the human story. They ask us to look at experiences and ideas outside our own and therefore ask us to be open and empathetic to diverse views and experiences (Goal 4a). These creative works use all of humanity as their subject matter and as a result promote interconnectivity of disciplines, ideas and cultures (Goal 6). Through a healthy interaction with art, we can constructively engage with our societies (Goal 3a, 3b) and develop an attitude of life-long personal discovery (Goal 1).

### **Menu Description**

Courses in the Artistic Engagement menu will introduce students to issues and processes of creative expression. These courses will ask students to interact with important expressive works and their creators while encouraging them to respond with their own well-formed thoughts and feelings. Since thoughtful interaction with ideas and emotions are an important aspect of experiencing expressive works, written or oral communication will be an important component of the course. The courses will include a knowledge base related to particular artistic disciplines and opportunities for experiential engagement with that expressive form.

### **Learning Outcomes**

Students having completed a course from the Artistic Engagement menu should be able to:

- demonstrate competency in the understanding of the knowledge base, processes and works within an art (2)
- employ critical thinking by coherently responding to art works in written and/or oral form (1.a., 1.b.)
- encounter art works and engage in personal responses to the ideas and issues within them (1.b., 1.c., 3.a., 3.b.)
- articulate an understanding of and appreciation for the creative process (1.c.)

### **Projected Course Options**

*Fine Arts: Art*

*Fine Arts: Music*

*Fine Arts: Theatre*

*Fine Arts: Integrated*

## **CIVIC ENGAGEMENT IN AMERICA (3 HOURS)**

### **Purpose and Rationale**

This menu provides students with a heightened appreciation of the historical and civic context of the United States. Although the two courses on the menu approach this goal from different emphases related to their disciplines, both fulfill key aspects of two of the six Learning Goals for Ouachita's educational program:

Goal 3: Heightened awareness of personal and social responsibility, including the ability to practice civic engagement, ethical reasoning, personal integrity, and stewardship.

Goal 4: Appreciation for cultural diversity and development of intercultural competence for constructive engagement in both local and global contexts.

### **Description of Courses**

*American Civilization* (currently CORE 2213)

This course provides a sweeping survey of the development of America from colonial times to the present. It approaches this task in a highly interdisciplinary fashion, focusing upon various political, religious, social, economic, and ethical factors that have contributed to the making of the American nation, including its historical interactions with the world as a whole. Any student taking either half of the standard U. S. History survey (HIST 2003 and HIST 2013) is exempted from taking this class.

*American National Government* (currently PSCI 2013)

This course explores the structure and dynamics of American national government, providing a broad-based introduction to the ideas and institutions that shape politics in the contemporary United States: the Constitution, federalism, Congress, the presidency, the judiciary, bureaucracy, political parties, elections, participation, the media, and public opinion. By cultivating a deeper understanding of how government works, the course encourages students to be informed, discerning participants in the system.

### **Learning Outcomes**

- Appreciation for the diversity of the American experience (4.a.)
- Knowledge of the development of the American political system (3.a.)
- General knowledge of development of American democracy (3.a., 4.b.)
- Appreciation for the development of American citizenship and potentials for civic engagement (3.a., 4.b.)
- Demonstration of basic geographic knowledge of the United States (1.f., 4.b.)

### **Projected Course Options**

*American Civilization*

*American National Government*

## **INTERCULTURAL APPRECIATION AND COMMUNICATION (6 HOURS)**

### **Purpose and Rationale**

In this menu we seek the development of an appreciation for other cultures and diversity, as well as the opportunity for students to strengthen their linguistic and communication competency, primarily through the study of foreign language. Studying a second language helps students understand the thought patterns and some of the cultural foundations of other peoples of the world. As an alternative, an extended overseas experience in a non-English speaking country will practically encourage a student to learn, participate and understand other cultures. In most cases this will also include language study.

### **Description of Requirement**

- Two Semesters of Language Study taken at Ouachita (or equivalent transfer courses) – 6 hours
- One semester or more of study in a non-English speaking foreign setting (Language study is normally included in these instructional programs, i.e., Salzburg, Hands-On Program, and Alicante, Spain.)

### **Learning Outcomes**

Rationale for Language Study:

1. To help a student see the world through another's eyes (4.a.)
2. To gain greater linguistic understanding and become a better writer and speaker of English (1.a.i., 1.a.ii)
3. To discover one's gift for languages. (3.d.)
4. To develop discipline required for learning another language. (1.c.)
5. To avoid producing a parochial or narrow student. (4.a.)
6. To understand and be better equipped to function in a global society. (4.b.)
7. To appreciate cultural values and customs of another people group. (4.a.)

Rationale for Non-English foreign experience:

1. To experience first-hand the culture of another country. (4.a., 4.b.)
2. To immerse oneself into another culture thereby learning more about them and our culture. (4.a.)
3. To broaden the horizons of the student and increasing knowledge of the world. (4.b.)

The above rationales will also be the basis for learning outcomes for individual classes.

### **Current Options for Language Study at Ouachita**

Chinese, French, German, Greek, Hebrew, Italian, Japanese, Latin, Spanish

## **PHYSICAL WELL-BEING (2-3 HOURS)**

### **Purpose and Rationale**

A state of physical well-being is not just the absence of disease. This component includes lifestyle behavior choices to ensure optimal health, avoid preventable chronic disease, and live in a balanced state of body, mind, and spirit. Physical well-being includes basic knowledge, physical skills, and attitudes to help students achieve and maintain optimal health.

This basic knowledge will help students understand how choices they make today will directly impact the quality of their future lives. Courses in the physical well-being menu will provide experiences in making personal lifestyle choices that will affect the student's future attitudes towards areas involving nutrition, exercise, and disease prevention.

### **Menu Description**

Courses in this area may:

- develop an understanding of and personal appreciation for the relationship of physical activity and/or nutrition to the prevention of chronic diseases, leading to the development of a healthier lifestyle
- be lecture-based and/or include an experiential component
- use the following types of assignments:
  1. individual demonstrations
  2. class presentations
  3. experiential logs
  4. written reflections
  5. field trips
  6. fitness labs
- be taken during the student's freshman or sophomore year

### **Learning Outcomes**

Through the successful completion of a physical well-being course, students should be able to:

- identify and describe the relationship between the concepts of physical activity and/or nutrition with or to the prevention of chronic disease (3.e.)
- measure and determine his or her own level of Health fitness (3.e.)
- set personal goals in the areas of physical skills and/or healthy nutrition, and positive attitudes necessary to maintain optimal health (3.e.)
- prescribe a personalized program for healthy lifestyle behaviors (3.d., 3.e.)

### **Projected Course Options**

*Concepts of Wellness*  
*Health and Safety*  
*Outdoor Leisure Pursuits*

## SCIENTIFIC CONNECTIONS (3 HOURS)

### Purpose and Rationale

In order to effectively participate in discussions and decisions about many of today's most pressing issues, OBU graduates will need more than a passing familiarity with scientific reasoning. In addition to developing a foundational understanding of scientific principles, students need to be able to apply those principles to other areas of their lives. They must be able to read and understand scientific analysis as presented in the media and in popular scientific literature. They must be able to critically evaluate scientific reporting to identify biases, to evaluate the quality of sources, and to assess the validity of scientific claims. They must be able to intelligently discuss the ethical and political implications of new scientific discoveries. Where the *Scientific Inquiry* requirement will help students develop their understanding of basic scientific reasoning, the interdisciplinary courses in this menu should focus on the application of those foundational principles to specific topics with the goal of making connections between science and other fields of study.

### Menu Description

Courses in this menu should be 3-hour courses at the junior level, and all should have the *Scientific Inquiry* course as a prerequisite. These courses should be interdisciplinary in nature, exploring the application of scientific principles and the connections between science and other fields of study. Courses will not have a required laboratory component.

### Learning Outcomes

Learning outcomes for courses in this menu will primarily address goals 1 and 6 of Ouachita's educational programs but could also easily touch upon goals 2 through 4. Students will:

- Discuss the impact of science on other disciplines (religion, history...). (6.a.)
- Reason through ideas to arrive at general principles (rules/laws). (1.d.)
- Apply general principles (rules/laws) to particular problems. (6.b.)
- Distinguish evidence-based conclusions from mere opinions. (1.b.)
- Demonstrate the ability to read and comprehend scientific literature written for the non-scientist. (1.f.)
- Integrate information from multiple sources and discuss science effectively in oral and written forms. (1.a.i., 1.a.ii., 1.g.)
- Construct and communicate with well-formed arguments (1.a.i., 1.d.)
- Interpret, summarize, judge the validity of, and develop reasonable conclusions from data. (1.b.)
- Identify and assess ethical issues pertaining to scientific discoveries, theories, or advances in technology. (3.b.)
- Identify bias in scientific claims and evaluate the quality and contextual relevance of evidence presented in order to recognize high quality scientific claims and sources. (1.b., 1.d.)

### Example Topics

Bioethics

Climate Change

Forensic Biology

Pandemics

Issues in Science and Religion

Philosophy of Science

History of Science

Chemistry and Art

## EXPERIENTIAL CORE

### Purpose and Rationale

Ouachita's Liberal Arts tradition affirms the development of the whole person through curricular and co-curricular opportunities and experiences (Goal 1). Engaging the world around us in meaningful ways helps to create connections and interactions that grow the person and the community (Goal 3b, 3d). The Experiential Core includes Chapel, the OBU Passport and the Art Series. These experiences run throughout a student's tenure at OBU and provide opportunities outside the classroom to engage with events that connect ideas and knowledge to practical experiences (Goal 6). The Experiential Core also allows for student to contribute to the campus community by sharing their skills and ideas through leadership, collaboration and participation (Goal 3a). The Experiential Core appears on the transcript, making visible the range of experiences and involvement chosen by the student during their time at Ouachita. A component of the Senior Seminar in a student's major will focus on reflecting on these experiential aspects of a student's education (Goal 1a).

### Description of Requirements

**Chapel.** Attendance at a weekly chapel program is required. The programs are designed to deepen the students' spiritual life, to broaden their cultural appreciation, and to realize their role as a part of the Ouachita family. Not all chapel programs are religious in nature; some are informational programs presented by campus organizations.

**Arts Series.** Encountering expressive work connects us with the inner worlds of others and stimulates dialogue about the experience of being human. Arts courses at Ouachita provide students with the opportunity to learn *about* the arts. The Arts Series seeks to add the equally important experience of learning about ourselves and our world *through* the Art works in our community.

The student will complete the following on-campus experiences during their tenure at Ouachita. *Students may use required events within an Arts course to satisfy these requirements.*

Art Events(3)	(Attend Exhibits or Workshops/Present work in an Exhibit)
Music Events (3)	(Attend Concerts or Recitals, Perform in Concerts or Recitals)
Theatre Events(3)	(Attend Plays, Perform in/Crew Plays)

Students will create a 1-2 page written response about each event and submit it to their online portfolio within two weeks of the event. A student might go to more Arts events during their time at Ouachita but would choose from those they attended to complete their Arts Series. The senior seminar or capstone in a student's field would have a component that responds to the students' experience with the Arts Series. An Arts faculty member would likely assist with the assessment of this assignment.

NOTE: See [Appendix C](#) for a more extended rationale for the Arts Series and for some logistical suggestions.

**OBU Passport.** The OBU Passport is a record of a student's journey through purposeful interaction with the world around them during their time at Ouachita. In keeping with Ouachita's mission of creating students with Vision, Integrity and a commitment to Service, the student will complete at least *two* experiences within *each* of the following areas during their tenure at Ouachita.

Intellectual Engagement: Lectures, Seminars, Cultural Events, International Study

Spiritual Engagement: Present/Lead in a Worship Service, Participate in a Church Event, Attend Bible studies, Attend Christian Life events.

Personal Engagement: Involvement in Athletics/Intramurals, Support for Chosen Causes, Involvement in Professional Organizations, Participation in Scholar's Day

Community Engagement: Involvement in campus organizations, Internships, Service projects, Volunteerism

A description of each experience should be created under each heading in the student's online portfolio.

### **Learning Outcomes for the Experiential Core**

Students will:

- Engage in events and activities within Ouachita's community (3.a.)
- Track their involvement in Ouachita community life through an online portfolio (3.a., 3.d.)
- Respond to and reflect on their experiences in response papers (1.b., 1.c., 3.c.)
- Connect curricular and co-curricular experiences through assignments in Senior Seminar (6.a., 6.b.)

## II. University Writing and Oral Communication Program

The university writing and oral communication program provides a structure for students to acquire and develop college-level communication skills. Articulate communication—along with the habits of thinking it requires—is one of the most important hallmarks of an educated person. The Ouachita graduate will not only be introduced to the basics of written and oral communication, but will practice these important skills throughout their educational program.

**Writing Instruction Courses:** Students must take two courses that focus on learning to write effectively. Every student must satisfactorily complete CORE 1043: Composition I (or an approved substitute or acceptable AP/CLEB/IB score).

For the second writing course, departmental faculty in each major will designate either a course in the major or a writing course in the English Department that will best serve their students. Writing courses in the major will reinforce general principles of effective writing and teach the appropriate conventions for writing in their discipline. Options for a second writing course in the English Department include:

CORE 1053	Composition II (possibly to be replaced by Intermediate Composition)
ENGL 3003	Advanced Composition
ENGL 3013	Technical & Professional Writing

**Writing Practice Courses:** Designated courses in the University Core and in the majors provide opportunities for students to further develop their writing skills and apply them in various settings and disciplinary frameworks. These courses focus on writing to learn, and the types of assignments vary depending on course content and objectives.

### Writing Practice Courses in the Core

- OBU Connections
- Interpreting the Bible
- Western Civilization in Global Context
- World Literature
- Arts Series Responses
- All courses in the Creative Expression menu
- All courses in the Civic Engagement menu

### Writing Practice Courses in the Major

To be designated by each department and included in course descriptions.

**Oral Communication:** Within the Flexible Core, *Fundamentals of Public Speaking* is an option under Applied Skills menu. Some majors require or strongly suggest this course. Furthermore, each major includes at least one required course with a substantial oral presentation.

**Administration of the Writing and Oral Communication Program:** Faculty coordinators of the writing component and the oral communication component will receive release time to serve as consultants for instructors teaching writing and oral communication courses in the core and the majors. In addition, an advisory council made up of at least one faculty member from each school will assist the coordinators in identifying needs and supporting instructors with helpful resources.

## Implementing the New Core Curriculum: Process and Timetable

If the new Core framework is adopted, both new and existing courses to be offered as part of the program will be reviewed and approved by the Interdisciplinary Studies Committee. Furthermore, proposed changes in the title or course description for existing courses, along with all new course proposals, will be forwarded to the Curriculum and Academic Standards Committee as part of our regular curriculum approval process. Each course will have a coordinator, who will work with other instructors to develop and submit to the ISC a proposed course syllabus including the following:

- catalog course description
- specific course objectives linked to the new university goals for student learning and, if applicable, to the appropriate learning outcomes for menus in the Flexible Core
- outline of course content
- assessment measures to be used in the course

The ISC will use the templates developed for the new framework to evaluate course proposals and determine whether they effectively address appropriate outcomes. Other factors such as class size and staffing considerations may also be considered.

The following schedule indicates deadlines for ISC approval, along with the semester when the new or revised course will first be offered under the new structure. The courses listed below are those the committee has projected to be included in the various menus based on feedback throughout this process. Any department seeking to add a course not listed below to a particular menu may submit a course proposal and rationale for inclusion, following the same schedule as the other courses for that menu. Once the entire program has been implemented, changes in menu options may be proposed as needed.

Course proposals must be submitted to the ISC by **November 1** for approval in December and **March 1** for approval in April. Courses may be approved and offered *earlier* than indicated on this schedule if potential transition issues are resolved, but they must be approved and offered no later than the dates below.

CORE Category or Menu	Course #	Course Title	Approved by	First offered
<b>Common Core</b>	CORE 1012	OBU Connections	Dec. 2013	Fall 14
	CORE 1023	The Contemporary World	Dec. 2013	Fall 14
	CORE 1043	Composition I	Dec. 2013	Fall 14
	CORE 1113	Survey of the Bible	Dec. 2013	Fall 14
	CORE 1123	Interpreting the Bible	Dec. 2013	Fall 14
	CORE 2213	Western Civilization in Global Context	April 2014	Fall 15
	CORE 2xx3	World Literature	April 2014	Fall 15
	CORE 2xx4	Scientific Inquiry	April 2014	Fall 15
<b>Analytic &amp; Quantitative Reasoning</b>	MATH 1003	College Algebra	Dec. 2013	Fall 14
	MATH 1033	Math for the Liberal Arts	Dec. 2013	Fall 14
	PHIL 1003	Introduction to Philosophy	Dec. 2013	Fall 14
	PHIL 1023	Logic	Dec. 2013	Fall 14
<b>Applied Skills</b>	COMM 1003	Fundamentals of Public Speaking	Dec. 2013	Fall 14
	BUAD 2433	Personal Finance	Dec. 2013	Fall 14
<b>Intercultural Appreciation &amp; Communication</b>	CHIN, FREN, GERM, GREK, HEBR, ITAL, JAPN, LATN, SPAN	Elementary I & II foreign language courses	Dec. 2013	Fall 14

<b>Physical Well-being</b>	KIN 1022	Concepts of Wellness	Dec. 2013	Fall 14
	KIN 2073	Health and Safety	Dec. 2013	Fall 14
	LST 3083	Outdoor Leisure Pursuits	Dec. 2013	Fall 14
<b>Civic Engagement in America</b>	HIST 2113	American Civilization	April 2014	Fall 15
	PSCI 2013	American National Government	April 2014	Fall 15
<b>Artistic Engagement</b>	ART 3113	Fine Arts: Art	April 2014	Fall 16
	MUHL 3113	Fine Arts: Music	April 2014	Fall 16
	THEA 3113	Fine Arts: Theatre	April 2014	Fall 16
	FINA 3113	Fine Arts: Integrated	April 2014	Fall 16
<b>Scientific Connections</b>	BIOL, CHEM, PHYS, others	New interdisciplinary courses will be developed for this menu.	April 2014 & ongoing	Fall 16

Other components of the curriculum—the Writing and Oral Communication Program, the Arts Series, OBU Passport, and Senior Capstone—will require additional planning and administrative support to ensure that they meet intended learning outcomes and can be effectively implemented. The ISC plans to organize working groups of faculty and staff for each of these four components to flesh out the details and assist the committee as it prepares to implement these requirements. The working groups will report to the ISC according to the following schedule.

<b>Curriculum Category</b>	<b>Activity</b>	<b>Plans Finalized</b>	<b>Start Date</b>
<b>Experiential Core</b>	Arts Series	March 1, 2014	Fall 14
	Chapel	N/A	N/A
	OBU Passport (Note: This schedule allows for a one-year pilot project in 2014-15 that could be conducted on a voluntary basis, with full implementation of the requirement projected to begin the following year.)	Dec. 2014	Fall 15
<b>Writing &amp; Oral Communication Program</b>	Departments will submit proposals for a second writing instruction course for each major. They will also designate at least one writing practice course in the major and at least one oral communication course in the major.	March 1, 2014	Fall 14
<b>Senior Capstone in the Major</b>	Each school/department will submit plans for the senior capstone for ISC approval.	Dec. 2015	Fall 16

Finally, the Interdisciplinary Studies Committee will assist advisors by offering training sessions for advising under the new Core Curriculum prior to the 2014 Early Registration sessions. The committee will also develop a substitution chart indicating which courses offered under the new curriculum satisfy requirements under the old CORE program and vice-versa. These transitional issues will be a major focus of the committee during the 2013-14 academic year.

## Appendix A:

### Learning Goals Subdivided for Specifying Outcomes

Through all its educational programs—curricular and co-curricular, classroom and experiential—Ouachita promotes the following goals for student learning.

1. Intellectual and applied skills that promote competency and lifelong learning:
  - a. articulate communication
    - i. written
    - ii. oral
  - b. critical thinking
  - c. creative thinking
  - d. analytic reasoning
  - e. quantitative reasoning
  - f. scientific reasoning
  - g. information literacy
2. Engagement with content and methods of the major domains of knowledge.
3. Heightened awareness of personal and social responsibility:
  - a. civic engagement
  - b. ethical reasoning
  - c. personal integrity
  - d. stewardship
  - e. physical well-being
  - f. spiritual growth
4.
  - a. Appreciation for cultural diversity
  - b. Development of intercultural competence for constructive engagement in both local and global contexts
5. Depth of knowledge and skills in a chosen discipline or combination of disciplines sufficient to provide the foundation for advanced study, professional competence, and meaningful work.
6.
  - a. Connect learning across disciplines
  - b. Apply knowledge and skills to solve problems.

## Appendix B:

### Proposed University Core Curriculum Structure

#### Common Core

**24 hours**

I. *Foundations*

OBU Connections	2 hours
Survey of the Bible	3 hours
Interpreting the Bible	3 hours
The Contemporary World	3 hours

Courses in this category must be taken at OBU, with the limited exception of approved Bible courses accepted in transfer from other Christian colleges and universities.

II. *Frameworks*

Composition I	3 hours
Scientific Inquiry	4 hours
Western Civilization in Global Context	3 hours
World Literature	3 hours

Course requirements in this category may be met through AP or CLEP credit or by approved courses taken at other accredited institutions. Furthermore, some exceptions are made based on disciplinary requirements).

#### Flexible Core

**23-24 hours**

I. *Analytic and Quantitative Reasoning (select one)*

Math for the Liberal Arts	3 hours
College Algebra	3 hours
Introduction to Philosophy	3 hours
Logic	3 hours

Note: Students with an ACT math score of 22 or below must choose one of the math courses.

II. *Applied Skills (select one)*

Fundamentals of Public Speaking	3 hours
Personal Finance	3 hours

III. *Artistic Engagement (select one)*

Fine Arts: Art	3 hours
Fine Arts: Music	3 hours
Fine Arts: Theatre	3 hours
Fine Arts: Integrated	3 hours

IV. *Civic Engagement in the American Context (select one)*

American Civilization	3 hours
American National Government	3 hours

V.	<i>Intercultural Appreciation and Communication</i>	6 hours
	Two semesters of the same foreign language: Chinese, French, German, Greek, Hebrew, Italian, Japanese, Latin, Spanish	
VI.	<i>Physical Well-Being (select one)</i>	
	Concepts of Wellness	2 hours
	Health and Safety	3 hours
	Outdoor Leisure Pursuits	3 hours
VII.	<i>Scientific Connections (select one)</i>	3 hours
	New courses to be developed for this menu.	

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**Experiential Core** **1 hour**

- Chapel* (non-credit requirement)
- Arts Series* (1 hour)
- OBU Passport* (non-credit requirement)

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**TOTAL CORE REQUIREMENTS** **48-49 hours**

## Appendix C: Additional Reflections on the Arts Series Proposal

At the recent faculty forum dealing with CORE curriculum revision several concerns arose concerning the Arts Series, including questions about its rationale and details of implementation. In an effort to keep the larger document streamlined, many of the specifics discussed in various sub-committees were not explained. I include here a more detailed explanation of the proposed series.

When a Fine Arts subcommittee met and considered reducing from two Fine Arts courses to one (as was suggested by most of the revision teams), there were two main concerns: the potential reduction of arts appreciation in the student community which has shown to be strong in surveys, and the need for students to interact with more than just one artistic form for one semester of their college career.

In looking at a sampling of other small liberal arts colleges, we discovered that some had one required CORE arts appreciation course and some had a required appreciation course and one required applied arts course (acting, drawing, voice lessons, etc.). As much as we liked the idea of including the applied aspect, it was agreed that we don't have staffing to handle such a requirement in the core curriculum.

The Arts Series was proposed to:

- Add experiential connection to the Arts as a university supported (1 hour credit) co-curricular activity.
- Help with the issue of Fine Arts courses being focused at the junior level without a structured sense of students developing their connection to the arts throughout their years at Ouachita.

The proposed Arts Series could potentially work throughout a student's time at Ouachita in the following ways:

1. Moodle would be used to set up an Arts Series portal of some sort for each student. This would include documents that would give information on attending arts events, descriptions/examples of good response papers and a place to turn in the responses.
2. In the Introduction to Liberal Arts/Connections course the Art Series would be introduced with the rest of the experiential CORE (Chapel and OBU passport). Students would be informed that they are to experience at least three arts events in each arts area (Art, Music, Theatre) during their time at Ouachita and they would be shown the Moodle interface for dealing with explanatory summaries and turning in responses.
3. Ideally, the whole experiential CORE would have a window in INFO that allows advisors to glance and see where students are in completing Chapel, OBU Passport, and Arts Series. Students could, of course, go to more Arts events but the ones they choose to respond to on Moodle *within two weeks of the event* would show up on the INFO report. Students not completing the series by graduation would need to complete a makeup project(s) similar to Chapel makeup.
4. Students would attend on-campus events for their series responses since a goal of the series is to connect students to the experiences created by their peers in their community.
5. Ideally the students would have some responses done before taking their Fine Arts course as a Junior or Senior, and could also use the required responses in their Fine Arts class as Arts Series responses (for example, **Fine Arts: Theatre** requires three responses to plays). This would allow for some of the responses to be guided by course information and other responses to be relatively

unguided (and I argue that this is a good thing. Art isn't appreciated only by people who are learned in the arts, or art is not a vital interactive part of a culture).

6. Participation in the arts would count toward the series and students could respond to that. For example, acting in a play, performing in a musical ensemble, or exhibiting in a juried student exhibit could count as a series event on which to write a response.

7. In the Senior Seminar course there would be an Arts Series paper (or portion of a larger paper dealing with integrating their OBU experience). Students would now have nine arts responses on their Moodle arts portal. Some guided by a class and some not. This would serve as primary source material (a sort of journaling) for the student to create their Arts Series paper from. This is what would be graded with the assistance of an Arts faculty member. The paper would be graded in relation to the student's experiential engagement as part of the experiential CORE not on artistic information related to arts courses. The goal is to have the student describe their engagement with the events and demonstrate connections to other aspects of their OBU experience. The Arts faculty would work with Senior Seminar faculty to work out specific details for individual Senior Seminar classes.

Students, as always, would approach the series with various levels of academic seriousness. Some would do the least possible on responses and might do poorly on the Art Series paper. Some would likely makeup responses to events not attended. Short of having a scanning sign-in system there's not a lot we can do about that (even those systems can be circumvented). I don't see the Arts Series as something that we would try to police heavily; instead it's a framework that provides some accountability throughout the student's time at Ouachita and encourages thoughtful engagement with art in our community.

The hope in the series is that we validate (by having to write, respond and earn an hour of academic credit) that engaging in art in your community is important. Without the series we have a single arts class. With the series we have structured opportunities for students to engage in the work of their peers. Sure, some will skate through without much thought but with the series we have the chance to make the arts a given part of their co-curricular experience. We would have students asking "what's going on in the Arts Series options this semester?"