International General Education Reform

• The Bologna Process for education reform began in 1999 and now includes 47 countries.
• Designed to make degree standards more comparable and transfers easier across greatly differing national educational systems. Used learning outcomes to do it.
• Goals included desires to:
  – facilitate mobility of students through different systems.
  – prepare students for their future careers and for life as active citizens in democratic societies, and support their personal development;
  – offer broad access to high-quality higher education, based on democratic principles and academic freedom.
National General Education Reform

• The Bologna Process spurred US interest in the concept of learning outcomes.
• Association of American Colleges & Universities has worked on general education reform for over a decade.
• In the 1990s in the US, accrediting agencies also began focusing on measurable learning goals and assessment to bring greater clarity and accountability to higher education.
• An AAC&U 2009 survey of member institutions reports that nearly 80% had developed learning outcomes for their general education programs and 72% are assessing learning outcomes across the curriculum.
Current CUNY General Education

- CUNY senior colleges range in required general education credits from 39 to 63.

- CUNY community colleges don’t have universal general education requirements. Instead, general education is organized by academic program.
Current CUNY Transfer System

- Course-matching model: students who take a course at one college and then transfer to another:
  - Receive credit if the receiving college has a course similar to the one they took.
  - Don’t receive credit if the receiving college doesn’t have a close match.
- The process involves subjectivity in how similar the courses are and must be for credit.
In Fall 2010, approximately 10,000 undergraduates transferred from associate to baccalaureate programs at CUNY.

In 2009-10, 62 percent of all baccalaureate graduates had transferred to the degree-granting college.
Transfer Problems at CUNY

Transfer often does not work smoothly.

• Some courses do not transfer at all.
• More often students receive only elective credit which may not help advance them toward their degrees.
• Transfer problems can slow students’ progress and contribute to excess credits. This increases costs and can discourage students from continuing.
• Increased credits can lead to financial aid running out before students finish.
CUNY Pathways to Degree Completion

- Resolution establishing Pathways To Degree Completion Initiative and our Task Force approved June 27, 2011, by CUNY Board of Trustees.

- The initiative is designed to create a curricular structure that will streamline transfers and enhance the quality of general education across the University.
Charge of the Pathways Task Force

• The Task Force will create the 30-credit Common Core by establishing required credits and learning outcomes in broad disciplinary/interdisciplinary areas. The Task Force’s Steering Committee will initiate and direct the process and will be advised by a larger Working Group with broad representation from CUNY’s colleges.

• The Task Force will submit its recommendation to the Chancellor by December 1, 2011.
Why Learning Outcomes?

• Learning outcomes shift from a focus on inputs to a focus on the outcomes of learning, with attention to specific competencies and forms of knowledge.

• By building the Common Core and, hence, a new transfer system, around learning outcomes, colleges can focus on student learning rather than course-matching. Colleges will offer core courses with confidence that, if those courses meet agreed-upon learning outcomes, students who take them and transfer elsewhere will receive full credit for them.
Learning Outcomes in the Pathways Project

• Learning outcomes at CUNY will be robust.
  – They will define the boundaries of the broad curricular areas in the Common Core.
  – They will determine which college courses will fit within different areas.
  – They will enable assessment of student learning in general education courses.

• By formulating learning outcomes for general education, CUNY will establish a common high standard.
Meaningful Learning Outcomes

CUNY will use learning outcomes in a meaningful way that will draw upon and extend practice elsewhere. CUNY’s learning outcomes will not be abstract, but will define the Common Core.
What courses will be in the Common Core?

CUNY colleges will decide on the courses for the Common Core. The courses will be submitted for review by a CUNY committee predominantly made up of faculty to insure that they meet the learning outcomes for their specified areas.
Which students will take the Common Core?

• All undergraduate students at the senior colleges and all community college students in Associate of Arts (AA) or Associate of Science (AS) programs.

• Note: Community college students pursuing Associate of Applied Science (AAS) degrees will take liberal arts requirements drawn from courses approved for the Common Core.
How will Common Core credits transfer?

- Students who transfer from one CUNY college to another will receive Common Core credit for all Common Core courses taken in the specified areas. They will be certified as having completed an area if they have earned the requisite credits assigned to that area. They will also receive partial credit if they have finished some of their credits and will earn unfinished credits at the receiving college.

- Note: AAS students may not have completed the Common Core. If they transfer to a baccalaureate college, they will need to complete courses in any unfinished areas of the Common Core.
Beyond our charge: “College Option”

- Senior colleges will have an additional 12 credits of general education.

- Students starting as first-year students at senior colleges must earn all 12 College Option credits.

- Students who transfer from associate to baccalaureate programs will take the College Option credits depending on how many credits they transfer with:
  - Students who transfer with less than 30 credits will take all 12 College Option credits.
  - Those who transfer with more than 30 credits, but without an associate degree, will take 9 of the College Option credits.
  - Those who transfer with an associate degree (whether AA, AS, or AAS) will take 6 College Option credits.
Beyond our charge: Entry into majors

• A committee chaired by Bill Kelly, President of the Graduate Center, will bring disciplinary groups together from senior and community colleges to establish from three to six introductory courses into CUNY’s largest transfer majors. The committee will begin its work in the fall.
Breaking down the Task Force’s charge

Not necessarily in this order:

• Decide disciplinary/interdisciplinary areas that constitute the Common Core
• Decide how 30 Common Core credits will be allocated across these areas
• Decide learning outcomes that apply to each area

Due Date: December 1, 2011
What must we decide at this juncture?

• Two routes for tackling our tasks:
  – Cross-Curricular Learning Outcomes Approach: Develop cross-curricular learning outcomes first, then identify Common Core areas and credit allocations, then map cross-curricular learning outcomes onto areas (LEAP recommends)
  – Specific Areas Learning Outcomes Approach: Identify Common Core areas and credit allocations first, then divide task force members up by areas to devise learning outcomes for those areas

• Must decide which direction the Task Force will go, which implicates the Working Group and Steering Committee’s tasks, as well as retreat on August 26.
CUNY’s Pathways Initiative will:

• Give all students (not just transfers) a compass for general education and allow them to become more intentional and reflective learners

• Strengthen educational achievement across CUNY by requiring all students to meet established learning outcomes through the Common Core curriculum