Steering committee members present:

- Michelle Anderson, Dean and Professor of Law, CUNY School of Law (Committee Chair)
- Paul Attewell, Distinguished Professor of Sociology, Graduate Center
- Michael Barnhart, Professor of Philosophy, Kingsborough Community College
- Laird Bergad, Distinguished Professor of Latin American and Caribbean History, Lehman College
- Theodore Brown, Professor of Computer Science, Queens College
- Katherine Conway, Associate Professor of Business Management, Borough of Manhattan Community College
- Edward Grossman, Professor of Mathematics, The City College of New York
- Mona Hadler, Professor of Art, Brooklyn College
- Orlando Hernandez, Professor of Modern Languages, Hostos Community College
- Patricia Mathews-Salazar, Professor of Anthropology, Borough of Manhattan Community College
- Elizabeth Nunez, Distinguished Professor of English, Hunter College
- Neal Phillip, Professor of Chemistry, Bronx Community College
- William Fritz, Provost, College of Staten Island
- Anne Lopes, Dean of Undergraduate Studies, John Jay College of Criminal Justice
- Elizabeth Beck, Student, LaGuardia Community College
- Steven Rodriguez, student, City College of New York

Working committee members present:

- Emily B. Anderson, Professor and Chairperson, Department of Social Sciences and Human Services, Borough of Manhattan Community College
- Martin Braun, Professor of Mathematics and Director of Freshman Year Initiative, Queens College
- Charlotte Brooks, Assistant Professor of History, Baruch College
- Donal Byard, Associate Professor of Accounting, Baruch College
- Peter Catapano, Associate Professor of History, New York City College of Technology
- Alex Couzis, Professor and Chairman, Department of Chemical Engineering, The City College of New York
- Ashley Dawson, Associate Professor and Chairperson, Department of English, College of Staten Island
- William Divale, Professor of Anthropology, York College
- Emmanuel Egbe, Professor of Business, Medgar Evers College
- Eva Fernandez, Associate Professor of Linguistics & Communication Disorders, Queens College
I. Welcome, Introductory Remarks, & Orientation

After introductory remarks and orientation, Task Force members convened in small discussion groups. The morning discussion groups, organized to include disciplinary variety within each group and representation of different kinds of campuses, focused on discussing and developing cross-curricular learning outcomes for CUNY. Each group had access to broad learning outcomes devised by other colleges and those from the Association of American Colleges and Universities (AAC&U) for inspiration, if they chose. Afternoon discussion groups, organized loosely by multidisciplinary areas, considered what the options offered from the morning groups and were invited to analyze them and suggest additional broad learning outcomes from the perspectives of their areas.
What follows are summaries of the reports presented by each discussion group to the Task Force.

**II. Reports on Morning Discussions**

**Group 1:** This group reported that its ideas were informed by the AAC&U’s Liberal Education & American’s Promise (LEAP) essential learning outcomes model. This model outlines four key areas, each of which possesses at least one sub-category:

- Knowledge of Human Cultures and the Physical and Natural World (to which Group 1 suggested adding a sub-category on interdisciplinary studies)
- Intellectual and Practical Skills (to which Group 1 suggested adding mathematical literacy)
- Personal and Social Responsibility (to which Group 1 suggested adding to an existing subcategory on ethical reasoning and action the areas of social justice and sustainability)
- Integrative and Applied Learning, to which the Group made no further suggestions

Group 1 added that it had also debated the place of service learning within the Common Core framework.

**Group 2:** This group reported that, relying largely on John Jay College’s learning outcomes framework, it had focused on the content that might rest within the area of “Essential Knowledge.” Such content should include:

- History (the history, cultures, and social and political institutions of the United States)
- World history (including religion, cultural norms, and political and economic systems)
- Literature (world literature)
- Awareness of how the individual fits into society and how societal institutions are structured
- Economics (the basic workings of the major economic systems and the roots of economic distress)
- Arts (history of theory and practice of the arts)
- Culture (working knowledge of and understanding for world cultural diversity)
- Science (ability to understand and/or apply scientific principles in an integrated fashion to identify and solve problems)

Group 2 also emphasized academic engagement, desiring a program that will strive to have students use their academic skills to engage with real-world problems in their communities and across the region. At least one learning experience should take place outside the classroom. It enumerated the following skills to be cultivated and demonstrated: the abilities to write coherently, speak coherently, think critically and analytically, conduct research, employ quantitative skills, and exhibit creative thinking when presented with ambiguous problems.
Group 3: This group presented the following desirable cross-curricular learning outcomes:

- Students will demonstrate an awareness of the process of artistic expression and creation.
- Students will be able to articulate the ethical consequences of the actions and decisions of individual groups and societies.
- Students will demonstrate competence in expository and analytical writing, including a mastery of the mechanics and conventions of writing in English.
- Students will demonstrate effective and persuasive expression of ideas orally and in writing in multiple media and appropriate contexts.
- Students will utilize research techniques in a variety of media to locate, evaluate, and synthesize information.
- Students will demonstrate an understanding of the methods and models that are used to explore human behavior within society and across cultures.
- Students will investigate, analyze, and understand similarities and differences across cultures, religions, and societies.
- Students will demonstrate an understanding of the broader cultural, historical, and social contexts of the nation and the world.
- Students will construct experiments to acquire and analyze data in order to test hypotheses and gain insights into the physical and/or cultural world.
- Students will demonstrate analytic, quantitative, and computational skills to solve problems.

Group 4: This group looked at the LEAP model and amplified it in the following ways:

- First, the group suggested that outcomes within “Knowledge of Human Cultures and the Physical and Natural World” must include knowledge of global issues.
- Within the area of “Personal and Social Responsibility,” the group specified that outcomes should also include the ability to articulate the ethical dimensions of issues and choices, as well as a demonstrated critical engagement with issues such as beliefs, race, class, ethnicity, gender, ability, and sexuality.

The group did not reach a consensus regarding additional outcomes within “Integrative and Applied Learning.”

Group 5: This group developed five learning outcomes areas of its own:

- Evaluating Information: Students will be able to critically evaluate information—understand facts, inferences, correlation, causation, evidence and conclusions; grapple with real-world problems applying values and ethical analysis; integrate data and sources before forming an opinion; and connect data and views.
- Creative Thinking: Students will be able to engage in creative thinking—understand and be able to provide alternative interpretations and explain implications of information; apply critical evaluation skills to new problems; and generate and incorporate new information.
Problem Solving: Students will be able to solve problems—define problems; separate relevant from irrelevant information; integrate new information; understand the scientific method and other modes of inquiry; and use disciplinary tools to address problems.

Communication: Students will be able to communicate effectively using multiple forms and channels—basic oral and written English; basic mathematical formulations; cognizance of and facility with multiple forms and channels of communication, including maps, graphs, artistic expression, technology, and languages other than English.

Values: Students will be able to demonstrate an understanding of values and social responsibility—understand the relationship between the individual and the community; understanding the relationship between learning and values; engage with global and environmental issues (broadly defined) and diversity.

Group 6: This group targeted specific outcomes. Its list of key outcomes included:

- Demonstrated proficiency in gathering and interpreting knowledge
- Ability to use evidence and data to justify and draw conclusions
- Ability to use oral and written communication skills to effectively convey a point of view
- Demonstrated knowledge of human cultures and the physical and natural world, with the additional inclusion of mathematical and scientific knowledge
- Demonstrated ethical judgment and social awareness

Group 7: In drafting a set of learning outcomes, this group drew upon two sources: the proposed CSI General Education Goals and the LEAP framework. The group noted that its draft presupposed knowledge, as it seemed difficult to determine any course that did not meet the knowledge requirements from the CSI listing. The group further recognized that the type of knowledge to be included required both breadth and depth; this should influence additional refinements, since it is critical that there is enough flexibility within the framework to support a range of different types of courses and disciplines. That said, the group presented the following outcomes framework:

- Critical thinking
  - Capacity to adapt knowledge, skills and responsibilities to new settings and questions
  - Use of evidence and the scientific method to explore and draw conclusions from issue, ideas, artifacts and/or events
  - Development of an aesthetic appreciation
- Quantitative reasoning
  - Mathematical and statistical reasoning, including computational thinking
  - Complex problem solving in an array of contexts and situations
- Written, oral, and visual communications
  - Capacity to understand, develop, and express ideas through reading, writing, and speech, in clear, grammatical, and appropriate ways
  - Ability to read, comprehend, synthesize, and present ideas using mixed text, information, styles, and images
- Information literacy
  - Ability to determine the need for information
• Ability to use appropriate informational tools effectively and ethically
• Ability to identify, evaluate, use, and share information
• Ethical literacy
  • Demonstration of intellectual honesty and personal responsibility
  • Awareness of ethical values and the social context of issues at local, national, and global scales.

III. Discussion

In the discussion that followed the presentation of the groups’ reports, the following issues and questions emerged:
• How to ensure that an adequate knowledge base is included
• How to ensure that the humanities, which in many ways are less measurable, are included
• How to understand different visions of what college is about
• How to ensure that, independent of knowledge, students have critical skills to apply in any field

IV. Reports on afternoon discussion groups

Afternoon discussion groups, organized loosely by multidisciplinary areas and representing different kinds of colleges, considered what had been reported from the morning and were invited to reflect critically on that work and/or suggest additional broad learning outcomes from the perspectives of their areas.

Group 1 (loosely organized around social sciences): This group reported that it had reached agreement on three issues: the need for (more) balance between an emphasis on knowledge and an emphasis on skills; the need for balance between broad and specific outcomes; the need for balance between credits assigned to social sciences and competencies in other skills.

Group 2 (loosely organized around English & communications): This group presented concerns some members had heard from campus colleagues about how the Pathways project might adversely affect foreign languages and interdisciplinary programs at CUNY. The group also expressed concern about aesthetic creativity and performance, which they felt was essential for a shared body of knowledge and cultural capital. In terms of foreign languages and interdisciplinary programs, it was acknowledged that the Task Force is focusing only on the first 30 credits within the Common Core. Each senior college will have an additional 12 credits to work with. If a college wishes to require students to study foreign language or anything else with those credits, it may do so. Further, the group noted that it is entirely possible that foreign language courses will fit the learning outcomes in one or more of the multidisciplinary areas that the Task Force ultimately recommends for adoption.

Group 3 (loosely organized around pre-professional programs, including nursing, health science, and social work): This group thought about how the general education that the students come in with will prepare them for a professional major. The group indicated that the greater the focus on critical skills, the better. Acknowledging that its view might be heretical, the group proposed that
critical skills may be acquired via a variety of content areas rather through work in a single discipline.

Group 4 (loosely organized around natural & physical sciences): One of this group’s chief concerns was how to achieve basic scientific literacy. Although science courses may fulfill many of the outcomes enumerated during the morning, some more specialized elements, such as use of the scientific method, may require more tailored matches. The group also raised the issue of special course prerequisites for some science programs (such as engineering).

At that point, Dean Anderson, responding to a question that she had received earlier, shared information she had just received on the areas that account for the top nine associate-to-baccalaureate transfer majors at the University:

- Accounting and Related Services
- Criminal Justice and Corrections
- Psychology
- Business Administration, Management and Operations
- Finance and Financial Management Services
- Teacher Education and Professional Development
- Biology
- English Language and Literature
- Nursing

Group 5 (loosely organized around mathematics/quantitative reasoning/computational sciences): This group’s report began by noting that “quantitative reasoning” is not as useful a term as “quantitative or symbolic reasoning,” and suggested that the latter term be used. A more profound concern is that within the new Common Core, some students might proceed through the framework without obtaining a certain level of sophistication in this area. Four additional area-specific outcomes the group suggested include:

- Ability to use symbolic methods to evaluate and analyze information
- Ability to translate real-world problems into models to analyze and find solutions
- A satisfactory level of confidence in using quantitative tools to solve problems
- An understanding that iterative steps are an essential part of the solution process

Group 6 (loosely organized around business and library science): This group agreed with the general outcomes areas of critical thinking, quantitative reasoning, written/oral/visual communications, information literacy, and ethical reasoning. The group suggested further that our general education requirements should meet the needs of external accreditation agencies (AACSB & ACBSP). The group indicated that it would like the general education core to be more systematic, process-oriented, and assessed. In this case, “process-oriented” means that the course content, sequencing, and design of the general education program should be focused on the development of key skills and knowledge, not only within individual courses but also as an overall contribution to the general education program. The group came up with a number of specifics it would like to see in the context of its own focus on business students and faculty.

- Within writing and composition, students should be able to express themselves clearly and concisely and synthesize information.
- Students should understand geography.
• Students should understand ethics.
• Students need to be able to read critically, utilize information resources effectively, and speak well.
• Students need a strong grounding in statistical reasoning.
• Students need an awareness of surroundings and cultural adaptability.
• Students’ cultural knowledge should encompass the arts, media, current events, and politics (including historical context).
• Civic engagement should be a part of what students learn.

Group 7 (loosely organized around history/philosophy/humanities): This group’s major concern was with what it perceived as an emphasis earlier in the day on skills at the expense of knowledge. The group argued for more of a balance between the two. The group raised again the concern that humanities coursework is harder to measure/assess and that that needs to be addressed. The group expressed a strong desire to add an emphasis on cultural and aesthetic skills to the earlier focus on practical and intellectual ones.

V. Discussion

In the discussion that followed on this, the following issues were raised and analyzed:

• What is the role the 30-credit Common Core? How much should reasonably be expected within the first 30 credits? Is it the role of general education to prepare students with the specific skills for a major that is yet to come?
• Is the aim of learning outcomes to create better citizens and/or cultivate certain skills?

VI. Administrative matters and next steps

Dean Anderson complimented Task Force members on their participation and on the exciting intellectual discussions that had emerged throughout the day. She provided the following outline of next steps

• Task Force members should expect to receive summaries of the day’s retreat and discussions.
• At its next meeting, the Steering Committee will review the draft learning outcomes suggested by the morning groups and the feedback from the multidisciplinary afternoon groups and draft a working framework of cross-curricular learning outcomes. That draft will be circulated to the Working Committee via email for feedback.
• The steering committee will then deliberate over the multidisciplinary areas that will comprise the Common Core. In addition to mapping some outcomes from the cross-curricular rubric, more specific outcomes may also be required. Work will continue with the aim of drafting credit allocations for the multidisciplinary areas.
• A draft document reflecting all work to date must be circulated to the colleges by November 1, at which point campus discussions should take place. Feedback must be received by November 15 so that the Steering Committee will be able to assimilate the feedback from all the colleges and make final revisions to the recommendations that must go to Chancellor Goldstein by December 1.
Members of the Task Force offered numerous responses to Dean Anderson’s comments.

- There was some concern that two weeks (the first two weeks of November) may not provide sufficient time for the colleges to review the draft and comment upon it. Dean Anderson noted that the two-week turnaround time has been announced, and it is up to the colleges and concerned groups to prepare for the work that must take place during that time. Dean Anderson also promised to enhance communication to the campuses and remind them about the importance of the first two weeks of November for this process.
- Since there are 2 to 3 faculty from each campus participating on the Task Force, it was suggested that these campus representatives use the structures on their own campuses, which they know best, to communicate all developments from the Task Force and to emphasize from now on the need for work to take place during early November. The suggestion of campus representatives taking responsibility for communicating with the relevant groups on their campuses was echoed later in the discussion.
- There was some question about how the feedback from the colleges will unfold in November. The routine practice of a coordinated college response via the President’s office of the office of the chief academic officer was suggested and accepted.
- Concern about misinformation about the Pathways project among certain groups was raised. It was suggested that an updated FAQ might help correct some of the misunderstandings that are circulating among some faculty.
- It was also pointed out that, as revealed when Task Force members introduced themselves at the beginning of the day, the Task Force membership contains a remarkable collection of expertise and experience in general education and curricular planning. It was suggested that this expertise be made explicit in a communication from Dean Anderson to the community, because at the moment, it is not fully appreciated.

Since the Task Force had been made aware of the impending hurricane and the fact that all CUNY campuses would be closed throughout the weekend, the retreat was adjourned a bit ahead of schedule, shortly after 4 p.m.