Summary of the Meeting

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

Central Office staff support present:

- Erin Croke, Director of Undergraduate Education Policy
- Erika Dreifus, Director of Communications for the Office of Academic Affairs

Dean Anderson called the meeting to order at 9:01 a.m.

I. Announcements

- Dean Anderson said that she had been impressed by the constructive nature of most campus responses that had been submitted by November 15 concerning the draft Common Core structure proposed by the Task Force. She highlighted the usefulness of specific suggestions for revision and suggested that the Steering Committee begin its work for this meeting by examining the major structural changes that had been recommended. Following those deliberations, the Committee could proceed to consider technical recommendations. She noted that certain objections that were submitted and received—concerning, for example the timing of the Pathways Project as specified within the Board of Trustees resolution of June 27, 2011; the Committee's jurisdiction; and the Board resolution's specifications for management of the
College-Option portion of the Common Core—were all beyond the scope of the Committee's charge and responsibility.

• Dean Anderson praised the members of the Steering Committee for all of their hard work to date, and she thanked the Committee's staff support from the Central Office for their assistance.

II. Major structural changes

• It was noted that several colleges had suggested that the fundamental draft structure—composed of a Required Common Core of 15 credits (English Composition [7 credits], Mathematical and Quantitative Reasoning [4 credits] and Life and Physical Sciences [4 credits]) plus a Flexible Common Core composed of five 3-credit liberal arts courses, with at least one course drawn from each of four thematic areas and no more than one course in any discipline)—should be modified. Many of the colleges advocated a Common Core model of ten courses, with all courses limited to 3 credits.

• This suggestion returned the Steering Committee to issues that had emerged in earlier discussions, particularly as the Task Force had considered two different models in developing its draft proposal. One model that had previously attracted support from both members of the Steering Committee and participants on the larger Working Committee had, in fact, relied on a model constructed of ten courses, each of which would be limited to 3 credits, while permitting limited exceptions for 4-credit math and science courses. Dean Anderson remarked that previous votes between models with "7-4-4" and "6-3-3" Required Cores had been close, both within the Steering Committee and when the full Task Force voted.

• In the ensuing discussion, concern was expressed that many faculty, especially faculty in the sciences, had supported the "7-4-4" model because of its flexibility for science courses with laboratory components. On the other hand, several committee members found compelling views expressed in the coordinated campus response from City College, which strongly urged a 6-3-3 model and said that the CCNY faculty "believes...that it can offer outstanding and more cost effective alternatives for non-science majors with a 3-credit science course."

• It was suggested that perhaps colleges should be permitted to determine how to assign the 15 credits within the Required Common Core themselves, but the suggestion was countered by the observation that such a move would be likely to complicate transfer for students who move between colleges with different Required Core structures.

• Dean Anderson suggested that straw polls might illuminate on which issues the members of the Steering Committee might have reached overwhelming agreement, and which issues should receive additional discussion.

• On the question of whether the Common Core should require 6 or 7 credits of English Composition, there was overwhelming support for shifting the requirement to 6 credits.
• On the question of whether the Common Core should require 3 or 4 credits within Mathematical and Quantitative Reasoning, there was overwhelming support for a 3-credit requirement.

• Since the straw poll revealed less agreement on whether Life and Physical Sciences should constitute 3- or 4-credits, discussion on that question continued. As the discussion progressed, it seemed evident that a clear majority supported a 3-credit requirement for Life and Physical Sciences, with discussion about a possible variant for 4-credit courses tabled for later discussion. Later discussion led to a poll with three options:

1) a "6-3-4" model, in which four credits would be required for Life and Physical Sciences. This model would leave 2 additional credits to be dealt with in some way in the Flexible Core.

2) a "6-3-3" model, with a possible exception permitted for colleges to offer 4-credit courses to satisfy the Life and Physical Sciences area pursuant to the provisions developed previously (see "Secondary Motion STEM Exceptions" within this PowerPoint http://www.cuny.edu/academics/initiatives/degreepathways/planning-process/10_14_11_Retreat_Presentation.pdf.) A fifth area would likely be added to the Flexible Common Core, also similar to the area envisioned as "Scientific World" as delineated in the PowerPoint.

3) a "6-3-6" model, with a 6-credit area for two courses in Science and Technology.

The Steering Committee voted for option #2.

III. Additional changes

• It was noted that several colleges objected to the proscription in the Flexible Common Core against taking more than one course in a discipline. Removing this restriction would allow more flexibility for course sequences, including in language study. The Steering Committee was reminded that this question had also come up in earlier Steering Committee and Task Force discussions. Three possible options emerged for the Steering Committee to vote on:

1) Maintain the restriction as originally presented in the draft model.

2) Eliminate the restriction altogether.

3) Modify the restriction to "no more than two courses in any discipline or interdisciplinary area."

The Steering Committee voted in favor of the third option.

• More than one college suggested removing the mentions of specific disciplines within the areas of the Flexible Core. After discussion, the Steering Committee voted to retain the listings, underscoring that they were not exclusive listings and that they were merely examples of the
kinds of disciplines that might offer courses that fit the areas.

- Several colleges recommended allowing performance art courses to count within the Creative Expression category, although such courses are not considered liberal arts and science courses as specified by New York State. It was noted that several senior colleges currently allow students to fulfill general education requirements with such courses. However, it was also noted that students are required to complete a specified number of liberal arts and science credits to obtain a degree. After much debate, the Steering Committee decided to maintain the requirement that only liberal arts and science courses count for the Common Core.

- A question was raised about whether academic programs may require that students take particular courses within the Common Core. It was clarified that individual academic programs may not require particular Common Core courses, but may suggest that students take certain courses in the Core that would count toward the major.

- The Steering Committee reviewed the more technical suggestions that individual campuses made as reflected in the matrix entitled, "Specific Recommendations on the Common Core Model."

- A number of suggestions were accepted. These changes were noted and tracked into a working document organized around the draft model.

- Several colleges offered suggestions for renaming area categories. The Steering Committee agreed that, as it had maintained from the start, the learning outcomes, not the titles of the areas, determine which courses are eligible for inclusion in Common Core. Nevertheless, the Steering Committee considered at length several recommendations to modify various area titles. Extensive discussion, for instance, took place regarding possible changes to the title of the category labeled "English Composition," with the Steering Committee in the end choosing to retain the category title.

Since considerations of modifications to learning outcomes in the areas of Creative Expression and Individual and Society had not been completed by the time the meeting ended, and other matters remained to be resolved, the meeting was adjourned pending further discussions and a subsequent meeting of the Steering Committee on November 28, 2011.

The meeting was adjourned at 12:03 p.m.