To: Dr. Clayton Baum, Chair, Curriculum Committee
From: Dr. Richard Turner, Chair, Institutional Core Curriculum Subcommittee
Subject: Recommended changes to the institutional core curriculum
Date: 25 February 2005

HISTORY
Review of the institutional core curriculum began at the 3 October 2003 meeting of the Curriculum Committee in response to a memo to Dr. Clayton Baum from Registrar Cookie Young. Discussion focused on the requirement of COM-1102 as a prerequisite for the civilization sequence [prerequisite affirmed by the committee at 29 October 2003 meeting], on the two civilization courses as prerequisites for upper-division humanities courses [issue unresolved at 29 October 2003 meeting], and on transfer students entering with many credits for humanities electives. The concern of Provost Dwayne McCay and two departments was that the prerequisites slowed down student progress, particularly in cases of some transfer students. It was pointed out in committee discussion that departments have sovereign rights over setting prerequisites for their courses and that the Curriculum Committee had addressed in 1998 the procedure for assignment of humanities transfer credits in Florida Tech curricula [reaffirmation of the 1998 procedure rejected at 29 October 2003 meeting].

The Institutional Core Curriculum Subcommittee was established by action of the Curriculum Committee at its meeting of 29 October 2003 “to reexamine the core requirements for all students at Florida Tech” [from Baum’s minutes]. The first meeting of the subcommittee was convened on 21 November 2003 by Dr. Baum. Dr. Richard Turner was elected chair. In addition to guests and proxies, the subcommittee members have included Drs. Baum (ex officio), John Cain (Aeronautics), Robert Fronk (Vice Provost for Academic Affairs), Bill Gabrenya (Psychology and Liberal Arts), Paul Jennings (Engineering), Nabil Matar (Psychology and Liberal Arts), Barbara Pierce (Business), and Turner (Science). The subcommittee subsequently met on 19 January, 18 February, 22 and 31 March, 12 and 21 April, and 14 May 2004 and on 11 and 18 February 2005.

ISSUES
The subcommittee addressed first whether or not the present core curriculum satisfies the standards set by SACS. We asked Bob Fronk to inquire of SACS about the use of communications and language courses as humanities and the need for the core to reflect the mission of the university. The issue that consumed most of our discussion was the Provost’s concern and that of two departments about long inflexible sequences of courses that impeded the progress of students who were out of phase in their curricula due to the students’ transfer from other institutions or to the addition of remedial coursework to their programs on the basis of diagnostic exams given upon entrance to the university. Discussion of this issue involved considerable input from the faculty of the Department of Communication and Humanities. Several other issues arose at meetings of the subcommittee, but they were dismissed upon discussion.
UNDERGRADUATE CORE REQUIREMENTS (2004–2005 University Catalog, p. 23)

Curricula for bachelor's degrees

Communications 9 cr, including COM 1101, COM 1102
Humanities 9 cr, including HUM 2051, HUM 2052
Note: Science education majors substitute HUM 3332 for HUM 2052.
Mathematics 6 cr
Physical and/or life sciences 6 cr
Social sciences 3 cr
Computer literacy any course designated “CL”
Total credits 33

Curricula for associate's degree, College of Aeronautics

Communications 6 cr: COM 1101, COM 1102
Humanities 6 cr: HUM 2051, HUM 2052
Mathematics 6 cr
Physical and/or life sciences 6 cr
Social sciences 3 cr
Computer literacy any course designated “CL”
Total credits 27

SACS GENERAL EDUCATION PROGRAM
The following items are taken from SACS documents [underscores added]:

7. The institution:

c. offers a general education program at the collegiate level that is (1) a substantial component of each undergraduate degree, (2) ensures breadth of knowledge, and (3) is based on a coherent rationale. For degree completion in associate programs, the component constitutes a minimum of 15 semester hours or the equivalent; for baccalaureate programs, a minimum of 30 semester hours or the equivalent. These credit hours are to be drawn from and include at least one course from each of the following areas: humanities/fine arts; social/behavioral sciences; and natural sciences/mathematics. The courses do not narrowly focus on those skills, techniques, and procedures specific to a particular occupation or profession. The institution provides a written justification and rationale for course equivalency.

15. The institution identifies competencies within the general education core and provides evidence that graduates have attained those college-level competencies.

The SACS requirement that the institution ensure training in the use of technology for student learning is not part of the general education program, but the inclusion of CL courses in our core curriculum is intended to satisfy this requirement.
SATISFACTION OF SACS GENERAL EDUCATION REQUIREMENTS

Use of Communications and Language Courses as Humanities Courses
Dr. Fronk’s contact at SACS stated that “it was never the intention of SACS to disallow writing courses such as our COM courses in the core requirements. The only stipulation is that they cannot represent the *only* humanities courses in our core” (Fronk email, 27 January 2004). Dr. Fronk (23 March 2004) reported also that SACS neither has guidelines regarding the use of language courses as humanities nor defines the term “humanities elective.”

The Core Curriculum and the University Mission Statement
Dr. Fronk [9 February 2004] pointed out that SACS has a strong emphasis on the institution’s mission. He commented that our present core curriculum is well aligned with the mission with regard to having “an organizational culture that values and encourages intellectual curiosity” and to “providing personal and career growth opportunities” for students.

Comparison of Present Core Curriculum and SACS Requirements: Baccalaureate

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SACS category</th>
<th>SACS requirement</th>
<th>Florida Tech core curriculum</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Substantial component</td>
<td>30 credit hours</td>
<td>33 credit hours</td>
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<tr>
<td>Humanities/fine arts</td>
<td>one course</td>
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<td>Social/behavioral sciences</td>
<td>one course</td>
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<tr>
<td>Natural sciences/mathematics</td>
<td>one course</td>
<td>12 credit hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Breadth</td>
<td>no occupational focus</td>
<td>no “writing for marine biologists” in core</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Course equivalency</td>
<td>written justification and rationale</td>
<td>transfer courses evaluated by respective departments;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[Use of technology]</td>
<td>[inclusion]</td>
<td>[CL course]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College-level competencies</td>
<td>identify and document</td>
<td>Accomplished by Dr. Fronk’s office</td>
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Comparison of Present Core Curriculum and SACS Requirements: Associate

<table>
<thead>
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<th>SACS category</th>
<th>SACS requirement</th>
<th>Florida Tech core curriculum</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Substantial component</td>
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<td>Humanities/fine arts</td>
<td>one course</td>
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<td>no occupational focus</td>
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<tr>
<td>Course equivalency</td>
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Conclusion
The present core curriculum of the university meets the qualitative standards of the current SACS requirements for baccalaureate programs and exceeds the 30-credit-hour standard by 3 credit hours. Requirements for the associate's degree in the College of Aeronautics exceed the 15-credit-hour SACS standard by 12 credit hours. Our inclusion of a course in computer literacy satisfies a part of the SACS requirements other than the core. The university's policy on transfer credit meets the SACS stipulation of having a rationale for course equivalency. A policy exists that "identifies competencies within the general education core" and provides a mechanism to gather "evidence that graduates have attained those college-level competencies."

CONSENSUS REGARDING OTHER ISSUES ABOUT THE CORE CURRICULUM

During its deliberations, the subcommittee discussed many issues related to the core curriculum. Most issues dealt with the Provost's concern about flexibility in programs, and a few additional matters arose that the subcommittee agreed should be put before the Curriculum Committee.

Distribution of Credits among SACS Categories
The subcommittee agrees that there should be no change in the part of the core dealing with mathematics (6 credit hours) and science courses (6 credit hours).

Writing Courses in the Core Curriculum
A full year of writing, as presently represented by COM 1101 and COM 1102, should remain part of the core curriculum. The primary goal in these courses needs to be the development of writing skills. The core should continue to require a third course in communication (COM)—one that is specified by each academic unit for its curricula or one that the unit leaves open for the student to elect.

Remediation in Writing Skills
The subcommittee requested that the faculty of the Department of Humanities and Communication revise the mechanism for remediation of students with poor writing skills to reduce the number of students who become out of phase in their writing courses. The department's faculty are, however, not convinced that students can be remediated by means other than enrollment in COM 0110 Basic Writing Skills. In view of this, the subcommittee supports the continued use of COM 0110 to remediate students with poor writing skills and believes that advisees should be encouraged by their faculty advisors to complete their COM 1101/1102 sequence during the summer following their first academic year at Florida Tech. If upon admission a student is identified early enough as one who needs remediation, the student should be encouraged to take COM 0110 in the summer preceding the semester of anticipated entry.

Foreign Languages as Humanities and Social Science Electives
The definitions for humanities (HU) and social science (SS) electives as found in the 2004–2005 university catalog should be revised to eliminate first-year foreign languages (LNG 1XXX). These courses would remain as liberal arts (LA) electives, and curricula may be revised to accommodate the desire of faculty of academic units to include the election of first-year foreign languages by their majors for graduation credit.
Civilization Courses as Prerequisites for Upper-division Humanities Courses
The subcommittee requested that the faculty of the Department of Humanities and
Communication eliminate the general prerequisite of HUM 2051 and HUM 2052 for its upper-
division courses. Upper-division courses should be reviewed for appropriate renumbering and
for the designation of prerequisite courses based on desired knowledge and skills. The purpose
of this request was to increase the flexibility of curricula and to reduce long sequences of
prerequisite courses. In addition, any revision to this part of the core curriculum must
accommodate the need for inclusion of HUM 3332 (American History: Reconstruction to the
Present) in place of HUM-2052. The response of the department was that the prerequisite of the
civilization courses is largely for the writing skills developed in those courses rather than for
their historical content. Flexibility of curricula and avoidance of long sequences of prerequisite
courses will be accomplished by the addition of courses mentioned in the next two paragraphs.

Inclusion of Eastern Civilizations in Humanities Courses
The subcommittee requested that the faculty of the Department of Humanities and
Communication revise the civilization courses to allow for greater inclusion of Eastern
civilizations. There was a strong desire among members of the subcommittee to increase the
offering of courses on Eastern civilization; but the ability of the department to offer courses in
this area was uncertain because of the current demands on and scholarly focus of existing
faculty. The department's faculty believe that the modification of the civilization courses to
include world civilization would greatly diminish the depth of coverage. [One member of the
subcommittee recommended a change of the titles of HUM 2051/2052 to "Western Civilization
1/2".] They are proposing instead to offer new courses (HUM 2XXX; prerequisite of COM
1102) and to modify a few existing courses to include Eastern civilizations. Some of the courses
would not require the civilization sequence and, therefore, would allow greater flexibility in
scheduling electives (HU and/or SS) by students who are out of phase in their curricula. The
subcommittee encourages the addition to the department's faculty of new hires with expertise in
Asian cultures.

Diversity of Lower-division Humanities Courses
The subcommittee encouraged the faculty of the Department of Humanities and Communication
to increase its offering of lower-division and upper-division courses; but it recognizes that the
department is limited by budgetary restrictions, demands on faculty time, and the desire of
faculty to offer courses within their areas of specialty to their own majors. The department
reported its plan to offer three new 1000-level courses with no prerequisites: logic, mythology,
pop culture. [Note also the addition of new 2000-level courses mentioned in item above.] The
subcommittee is concerned about the use of 1000-level HUM courses in curricula with few HU
electives, and it would encourage the restriction of at least 3 credits of HU elective in the core
curriculum to 2XXX–4XXX courses. [Note that many courses with prefixes other than HUM
are designated HU electives in the university catalog.] In view of the willingness of humanities
faculty to add lower-division courses, the subcommittee again encourages the addition of new
courses to the department.

Military Science 4 as Humanities or Social Science Elective
The subcommittee has not evaluated the use of MSC 4002 Military Science 4 as a HU or SS
elective. Current acceptance of this course for such electives is not in question.
Use of Summer Semester by Out-of-phase Students
In addition to the incorporation of new HUM courses to increase flexibility in curricula, transfer and remediated students may take courses during summer semester to regain track in their curricula. This solution is, of course, not restricted to students who are out of sequence in COM and HUM. University literature should include a statement that recommends use of summer semester (at Florida Tech or elsewhere) to catch up in sequences that are offset by remedial coursework, as in HUM, COM, and MTH, and in sequences of courses in their majors. Such a statement would serve to remind advisors as well as students.

RECOMMENDATIONS
1. The core curricula for baccalaureate and associate degrees should remain as currently published except for the following change for baccalaureate degrees:
   Humanities 9 cr (HUM 2051, HUM 2052, and 3 cr humanities elective at 2000-level or higher)

2. The designation “HU/SS” should be removed from the catalog descriptions for LNG 1XXX courses. Students who have already taken LNG 1XXX courses to satisfy HU/SS requirements should be exempted from application of this change.

3. The Department of Humanities and Communication should have one or more additional faculty positions to accommodate the addition of lower-division courses and the expansion of faculty expertise in Eastern civilizations.

4. Admitted students who are found in need of remediation should be contacted by the appropriate campus office and encouraged to take remedial courses during the summer semester preceding their anticipated semester of entry.

5. In view of the university’s desire to graduate students within four years, the university should publish a statement that recommends the use of summer semester (at Florida Tech or elsewhere) by students to catch up in sequences that are offset or broken by remedial coursework, transfer from another university, unsatisfactory performance, or low credit load. Appropriate documents for such a statement would be the Academic Advising Handbook (Academic Support Center) and Student Handbook (Office of the Dean of Students).