

Recommendation of the Subcommittee on General Education: CLAS College Requirements in the era of the Common Curriculum

April 9, 2024

Executive Summary

This recommendation provides a proposed framework for college-wide curricular requirements in CLAS to pair with the launch of the university's Common Curriculum launching in academic year 2025-26.

Alongside each specific recommendation is a complete explication of our process and rationale – we strongly encourage the full CLAS C&C to review this document in its entirety.

- We define the CLAS Bachelor of Arts degree and the CLAS Bachelor of Science degrees, using the learning outcomes associated with each to shape the structure of our college requirements.
- We propose the following set of requirements for CLAS, and explain our rationale for each:
 - Under the Common Curriculum: To increase students' experience with *Social and Cultural Studies*, two additional courses in Topics of Inquiry 2 and/or 5 for B.A. students, and one additional course for B.S. students. To maintain the college's curricular commitment to *Diversity, Equity, and Social Justice*, one additional course in Topic of Inquiry 3 for all students. This additional coursework can, in part, suffice the Common Curriculum's Focus Area requirement and 21-credit minimum.
 - We propose three CLAS-specific requirements that we deem necessary in the modern era: *Communication and Dialogue; Information, Digital, and Media Literacy; and Leadership Skills and Ethics*.
 - We uphold the intermediate-level Second Language (SL) requirement and the 9-credit Quantitative Competency (Q) requirement for CLAS students.
 - We propose a single addition of EARTH 1050 to the options for the B.S. Science Requirements.
- We propose a set of Guiding Principles for the three CLAS-specific requirement categories, and a set of Operating Principles for managing the requirements in the college. We also offer a prospective Plan of Study document, and a small selection of potential courses for each requirement category to help visualize the full proposal in action.
- Finally, we expand the procedure used to propose an alternative Bachelor of Science plan of study such that both B.A. and B.S. programs can propose alternative requirements, subject to the review of a special subcommittee and approval of the full CLAS C&C.

Introduction

This subcommittee originally reviewed the structure of the UConn Common Curriculum to determine if its Topics of Inquiry, Competencies, and requirements were sufficient to prepare students in the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences for their major fields of study. In Spring, 2023, this subcommittee returned a recommendation that CLAS would require additional college-level requirements, but that specific details would depend on the shape of the Common Curriculum after units had migrated their existing general education courses into the new system. The subcommittee also recommended revisiting the current college Quantitative and Second-Language competency requirements to determine if they should change in any way under the Common Curriculum. In Fall, 2023, the subcommittee was charged with addressing the unfinished business in its recommendations, to ensure that the CLAS requirements would be defined in time to plan for the launch of the Common Curriculum in Academic Year 2025-26.

Our process to meet this charge was multifaceted. We reviewed available data on the Common Curriculum Migration to better understand the shape of the Common Curriculum once populated with actual courses. We also examined data related to the aforementioned competencies and spoke with leadership from CCC+'s Quantitative Competency working group and the Department of Literatures, Cultures, and Languages. We considered curricula at peer and aspirant institutions, as well as UConn's undergraduate competitors. We then discussed our college, its place in the university, and its value proposition for our students. Finally, we used this work to better define the undergraduate degrees we offer, outline the requirements for each, and articulate the process for managing these requirements at both the college and unit levels. We share our findings, rationale, and ultimate recommendation to the CLAS C&C in this document.

One note as we begin: We have tried to fully explicate our process in this document, both as a means of supporting our ultimate recommendation, and as a matter of transparency for future C&C decisions in the decades to come. At numerous points in this process, we have attempted to piece together curricular history to understand current procedures – when that history was clear, it made our work significantly easier. We feel a thorough and transparent document is critical to helping our future peers make informed decisions at the next critical juncture. To those reading in the future: We hope this is helpful to whatever charge you must meet.

The Existing General Education System and the New Common Curriculum, a review

As outlined in our 2023 recommendation, the Common Curriculum was designed to replace the university's existing General Education requirements. Under the existing system there are four content areas: (1) Arts & Humanities, (2) Social Sciences, (3) Science & Technology, and (4) Diversity & Multiculturalism. UConn students must complete two courses in each content area; one course in area 3 must have a laboratory component, and one course in area 4 must cover international topics. The system also stipulates four competencies: Quantitative, Second Language, Writing, and Environmental.

Under the existing system, CLAS placed the following additional requirements on students: (1) Two additional Content Area 1 courses for B.S. students, and Three additional Content Area 1 courses for B.A. students, separated into five distinct sub-areas labeled A through E; (2) One additional quantitative course for B.A. students; (3) A specified slate of courses in Biology, Math, Chemistry, and Physics for B.S. students; (4) Students who do not complete the Second Language requirement prior to enrolling at the university must complete four semesters of a language through the intermediate-level.

Under the Common Curriculum, the four Content Areas are replaced by six Topics of Inquiry: (1) Creativity, Design, Expression, Innovation, (2) Cultural Dimensions of Human Experiences, (3) Diversity, Equity, and Social Justice, (4) Environmental Literacy, (5) Individual Values and Social Institutions, and (6) Science and Empirical Inquiry. Students must complete at least 3 credits in each Topic of Inquiry, including at least one laboratory course in TOI 6. Students also must complete three courses in a focus area, which consists of either (a) any trio of courses in a Topic of Inquiry, or (b) any trio of courses approved as an academic 'theme.' Five competencies are specified – Q, W, and Second Language remain unchanged, and new competencies "Dialogue" and "Information, Digital, and Media Literacy" are added and framed as being "infused throughout the curriculum." Environmental literacy is removed as a competency given its placement as a TOI.

The Common Curriculum Migration

Academic year 2023-24 was a busy one for units in CLAS, as existing general education courses were migrated to the new Common Curriculum. With approximately 90 percent of courses in the existing general education system originating in CLAS, the college was front and center in the migration process. This

subcommittee is especially grateful to CCC+ Chair Pam Bedore and Program Coordinator Karen McDermott for their assistance and willingness to share data from the migration process.

To better understand the practical shape of the Common Curriculum, we performed an analysis of course transition data (as intended by units; final decisions will require complete review and approval by the appropriate CCC+ subcommittees.) When counting crosslisted courses once per unit, nearly 700 courses signaled a desire to migrate to the Common Curriculum; approximately 77 percent of those courses aligned with two Topics of Inquiry. The most popular TOI elections were TOI 2 (Cultural Dimensions of Human Experiences, with over 400 courses) and TOI 3 (Diversity, Equity, and Social Justice, with over 300 courses.) A Sankey plot was created to illustrate the migration process more efficiently, and is shared in Figure 1 below:

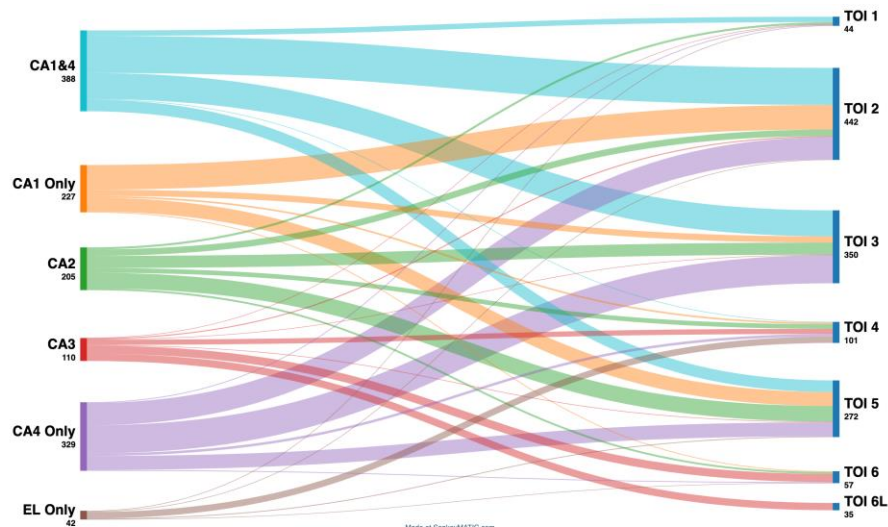


Figure 1. Sankey plot of content area to intended topic of inquiry migrations.

The above plot is only partially instructive, however, because most courses aligned with two Topics of Inquiry, meaning the same course can be seen in multiple pathways. On the other hand, visualizing all possible CA options to all possible combinations of TOI options is too cluttered to be a useful illustration. To identify the most popular trends, we removed all migration patterns used by fewer than 10 courses, which provided a more intuitive visualization of which kinds of *Content Area* courses landed in which combinations of *Topics of Inquiry*, as seen in Figure 2:

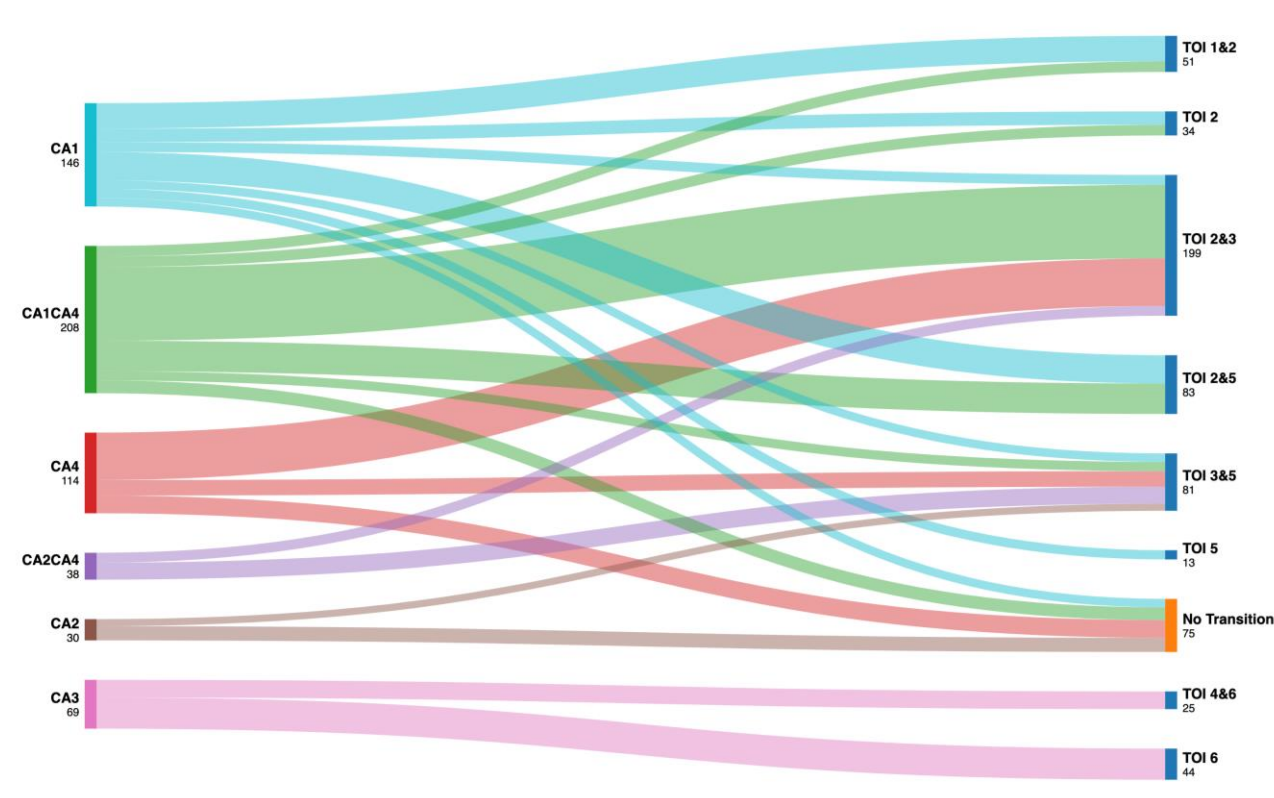


Figure 2. CA to TOI intended migrations, all possible combinations, patterns N<10 suppressed.

The data make it clear that outside of CA3 (Science and Technology) mapping fairly cleanly to TOI 6, most legacy “Content Areas” have been widely dispersed across the Common Curriculum. In particular, we also noted the conflation of TOI 2 (Cultural Dimensions of Human Experiences) and TOI 5 (Individual Values and Social Institutions.) Courses from the Humanities and Social Sciences spread to each, likely as a byproduct of the widening of TOI 5’s definition before the Common Curriculum was approved. We were also heartened to see TOI 3 (Diversity, Equity, and Social Justice) well-represented, and confirmed a University-wide suspicion that more courses will need to populate TOI 1 (Creativity, Design, Innovation, and Expression.)

When we began our work this year, our subcommittee welcomed the possibility that the Common Curriculum migration would unfold in a way that made our college level requirements instructive: If we could clearly see the critical aspects of our college curriculum packaged neatly into the specified Topics of Inquiry, our work would be simple. On the other hand, if the essential components of a modern *Liberal Arts and Sciences* education weren’t immediately visible in the Topics of Inquiry, we would need to make our own further specifications. After reviewing the migration data, we decided to move forward with specifying our own college-level requirements, with the mutual understanding that we would rely upon the Common Curriculum framework wherever possible to streamline processes.

Charting a Path for CLAS

We started the process of determining *what CLAS should require* by thinking about the primary thing that CLAS delivers to its undergraduate students: degrees in the Arts and Sciences. Indeed, the degree is an attestation that the totality of our students’ educational experiences holds value both in and outside the institution. Colloquially, students talk about going to college as “getting a degree,” even if the oversimplification makes us bristle. Undoubtedly, as educators in the college, we are as much about the journey as we are the destination, but there is some value in remembering that if our programs are working

properly, *the journey is in the destination*. The value of a CLAS degree is a testament to the quality of its academic programs.

In a 2006 document homed on this Committee's web site, Chair Jack Manning articulated the CLAS C&C's work as follows:

We are charged by our college faculty to review and adjudicate all changes and innovations to the curricular offerings of the college. We are expected to apply to all such proposals the standards and expectations of quality and suitability arising from the college's customary values and practices.

We strongly feel that, 18 years later, this committee still routinely enacts that work. But where do we articulate our “customary values and practices?” Scattered throughout the committee's past literature, you will find hints of these values and practices. It exists in our collective institutional memory, and in some of our procedures and policies. But we realized, by and large, there is no central organizing document for what we aspire to do with our requirements and programs, or what standards to hold them to when evaluating proposals for change. Our college confers two undergraduate degrees: The Bachelor of Arts and the Bachelor of Science. In all the history of the college, neither has ever been defined. We decided that our work must start there, and work its way down to requirements, procedures, and practices.

Our committee met our charge, then, with a 5-step plan:

1. Define the CLAS Bachelor of Arts Degree, and the CLAS Bachelor of Science Degree, with learning outcomes - some shared, some distinct - expected in each. (conceptualization, broad)
2. Use the degree definitions to determine and define the categories for college-level requirements for each degree. (conceptualization, specific)
3. Determine the relevant credit loads in each category. (operationalization, broad)
 - a. This step included the charge to review the Second Language and Q requirements, and to incorporate the B.S. science requirements.
4. Determine a plan for implementation and oversight of the college-level requirements. (operationalization, specific)
5. Establish procedures for situations where the needs of individual programs may differ.

Our discussions (in meetings, working hours, phone calls, and asynchronously over email and shared documents) were extensive in this process but largely cohesive, progressing with steady momentum. In the balance of this document, we present each of these 5 steps and our findings and recommendations.

Defining the Degrees

We reviewed existing documentation, program descriptions, and the CLAS Strategic Plan as we sought to build definitions for our degrees. We also reviewed the materials of comparable Schools/Colleges at Peer and Aspirant institutions and undergraduate competitors – most of which do not further specify *their* degrees but did have some useful discourse on the value of their programs to students. Finally, we reviewed other institutions nationwide to see how they describe a liberal arts education; compare and contrast B.A. and B.S. degrees; and articulate the value of pursuing a breadth of academic coursework beyond a given academic major.

Ultimately, we crafted a foreword about the college and specific definitions of the B.A. and B.S. degrees, complete with learning outcomes. In doing so, we remarked – on more than one occasion – that articulating *what we do in* CLAS emphasized the importance of college-level requirements that tie together our numerous academic programs. The foreword and definitions are included below.

College of Liberal Arts and Sciences

As the largest school or college at the University, the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences is the hub of learning and research at UConn. Through critical research and inquiry, creative education and mentorship, and ethical social engagement, we empower all members of the UConn community to discover their agency and do meaningful work in the world. CLAS degree programs create and develop knowledge across the humanities, social sciences, life sciences, and physical sciences. Our students emerge from their studies with the skills and knowledge necessary to think independently, engage local and global communities as active and responsible citizens, and learn for a lifetime.

The college offers a variety of undergraduate programs leading to either a Bachelor of Arts (B.A.) degree or a Bachelor of Science (B.S.) degree. Students pursuing either degree will be exposed to a range of academic traditions, learning environments, and opportunities to develop skills that will enrich their lives as both citizens and professionals. By building a diverse foundation of knowledge, a rich understanding of how the world works, and the ability to communicate across boundaries, CLAS graduates emerge from the college prepared to make positive change in the world.

The Bachelor of Arts Degree

The Bachelor of Arts degree marries a broad education across the liberal arts with a specialization in one or more major fields of study. Students pursuing a B.A. degree will complete coursework in the humanities, arts, social sciences, and life and physical sciences to establish the intellectual breadth necessary to tackle pressing social, economic, and environmental challenges. At the same time, students acquire transferable professional skills in leadership, communication, critical thinking, and technology highly valued in all sectors of the workforce. Across dozens of subject areas – and especially through interdisciplinary courses – CLAS Bachelor of Arts students develop a range of skills that prepare them to be engaged citizens, strong professionals, and good people.

We draw upon our diverse backgrounds and areas of study to expose students to novel ideas and expand their horizons as individuals. In addition to developing extensive knowledge in their major field of study, our broad, liberal arts curriculum empowers CLAS B.A. students to:

- Critically analyze and interpret texts of historic, literary, cultural, philosophical, and scientific nature.
- Understand, examine, and relate to a variety of cultures, social systems, and perspectives.
- Promote equity and justice in communities and social institutions.
- Communicate with diverse audiences across a range of professional, personal, and academic contexts.
- Evaluate the quality and veracity of information in a variety of modern formats.
- Solve complex problems at the individual, community, and global level by drawing on a range of disciplinary and cultural perspectives.

- Develop the ethical grounding necessary to be effective, inclusive, and responsible collaborators and leaders.
- Cultivate the capacity to entertain novel ideas and meet unforeseen challenges.

The Bachelor of Science Degree

The Bachelor of Science degree connects the principles of scientific study and practice with a refined expertise in a chosen scientific domain. Inspired by the Science Council (2015) we apply a broad definition of science: “the pursuit and application of knowledge and understanding of the world following a systematic methodology based on evidence.” Students pursuing a B.S. degree will train in the fundamental components of scientific reasoning, methodology, and analysis, while developing a deeper understanding of advanced topics within their chosen scientific discipline. Because science is shaped by and interpreted through the human experience, CLAS Bachelor of Science students draw from the humanities, arts, and social sciences to develop a range of skills and understanding that will prepare them to excel as scientists, citizens, and people.

Beyond developing extensive knowledge in their major field of study, our multifaceted curriculum empowers CLAS Bachelor of Science students to:

- Employ deductive and inductive reasoning and experimental methods to design and conduct scientific research.
- Cultivate the extensive quantitative skills necessary for scientific analysis and statistical interpretation.
- Communicate complex information to diverse audiences across a range of contexts.
- Evaluate the quality and veracity of information in a variety of modern formats.
- Draw on various disciplinary, cultural, and theoretical perspectives to apply scientific training to complex problems.
- Promote equity and justice in communities and social institutions.
- Develop the ethical grounding necessary to be effective, inclusive, and responsible collaborators and leaders.
- Cultivate the capacity to entertain novel ideas and meet unforeseen challenges.

Defining the College Requirements

We revisited the degree definitions we agreed upon to identify areas where we would require students to complete coursework beyond their major field of study. The process was instructive, with objectives mapping to coursework in a straightforward fashion. As we previously established, we relied upon the Common Curriculum framework whenever possible to streamline processes. Table 1 maps the degree learning outcomes to our recommended course requirements.

Table 1. CLAS Requirements as Shaped by Degree Definitions

Degree Learning Outcomes	CLAS Requirements
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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • (B.A.) Critically analyze and interpret texts of historic, literary, cultural, philosophical, and scientific nature. • (B.A.) Understand, examine, and relate to a variety of cultures, social systems, and perspectives. • (B.A.) Solve complex problems at the individual, community, and global level by drawing on a range of disciplinary and cultural perspectives. • (B.S.) Draw on various disciplinary, cultural, and theoretical perspectives to apply scientific training to complex problems. 	<p>Additional coursework in Social and Cultural Studies. These topics are captured in the Common Curriculum (TOI 2: Cultural Dimensions of Human Experiences; TOI 5: Individual Values and Social Institutions.)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For B.A. Students: 2 additional courses in TOI 2 and/or TOI 5 (at least 4 total courses across both TOIs.) These courses may be used in whole or in part to meet the student's Common Curriculum focus area requirement. • For B.S. Students: 1 additional course in either TOI 2 or TOI 5 (3 total across both TOIs.)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • (B.A. & B.S.) Promote equity and justice in communities and social institutions. 	<p>Additional coursework in Diversity, Equity, and Social Justice – Topic of Inquiry 3.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For B.A. and B.S. Students: 1 additional course in TOI 3 (2 total in this TOI.)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • (B.A.) Communicate with diverse audiences across a range of professional, personal, and academic contexts. • (B.S.) Communicate complex information to diverse audiences across a range of contexts. 	<p>Coursework in Communication and Dialogue, developing the skills and understanding to engage other individuals in various contexts.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For B.A. and B.S. Students: 1 course (from a developed list of CLAS offerings) that covers Communication and Dialogue.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • (B.A. & B.S.) Evaluate the quality and veracity of information in a variety of modern formats. 	<p>Coursework in Information, Digital, and Media Literacy (IDML), wherein students develop the skills to properly evaluate information. Likewise, enhanced quantitative work beyond university requirements to promote statistical literacy.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For B.A. students: 1 course (from a developed list of CLAS offerings) in IDML, and 1 extra Q course (9 total credits.) • For B.S. students: 1 course (from a developed list of CLAS offerings) in IDML, and the science sequence.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • (B.A. & B.S.) Develop the ethical grounding necessary to be effective, inclusive, and responsible collaborators and leaders. • (B.A. & B.S.) Cultivate the capacity to entertain novel ideas and meet unforeseen challenges. 	<p>Coursework in Leadership Skills and Ethics, wherein students develop skills in problem solving, reasoning, and ethical behavior from philosophical, institutional, and/or organizational perspectives.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For B.A. and B.S. Students: 1 course (from a developed list of CLAS offerings) that covers Leadership Skills and Ethics.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • (B.S.) Employ deductive and inductive reasoning and experimental methods to design and conduct scientific research. • (B.S.) Cultivate the extensive quantitative skills necessary for scientific analysis and statistical interpretation. 	<p>The CLAS B.S. Science Requirements:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For B.S. Students: One Approved Sequence in CHEM. • For B.S. Students: One Approved Sequence in MATH. • For B.S. Students: One Approved Sequence in PHYS. • For B.S. Students: One of BIOL 1107, 1108, 1110, or EARTH 1050.

A brief rationale for each requirement, beyond its fit to the degree outcomes:

- As mentioned in our analysis of the Common Curriculum, the migration has left many courses with similar aims spread across TOIs 2 and 5. At the college level, we want to ensure our students have a greater breadth of understanding in these areas than the prescribed one course in each. The CLAS requirement of **Social and Cultural Studies** pushes B.A. students to take two additional courses in these Topics of Inquiry, for a total of 12 credits (in some combination) across TOIs 2 and 5.

Depending on a B.A. student's choices, some or all of these additional courses may be used to meet the Common Curriculum's focus requirement. For B.S. students, one extra course in Social and Cultural Studies will increase student experiences in these domains. Ultimately, given our audience in this recommendation, we won't take up too much time extolling the virtues of the humanities and social science courses that populate these topics, but we feel strongly that a CLAS education should always include multiple courses in these domains.

- Requiring an additional course in TOI 3, ***Diversity, Equity, and Social Justice*** seems essential for the college. The Common Curriculum would lessen CLAS students' obligations in this domain; students previously had to complete two "Diversity and Multiculturalism" courses but under the new system would only need one TOI 3 course. We feel strongly that all our students should continue to complete 6 credits of coursework in this area, and we offer a staggering number of courses that will align with TOI 3. Our discussion was unanimous and unambiguous in making this recommendation.
- We recognized the growing role of ***Communication and Dialogue*** in modern society and felt it crucial that our students have the capacity to engage others across a variety of settings. In modern society, individuals are constantly communicating – community spaces, workplaces, and social circles engage round-the-clock due to increases in communication technology. Our communication is also substantially more varied than previous generations, with challenges of multitasking, on-the-fly modality switching, and simultaneous interactions with different audiences serving a range of communicative goals. As educators, we often remark that our students could improve in communication, and we can state confidently that their career prospects will also benefit from such improvement. The National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE) defines Communication as one of its eight career-readiness competencies, emphasizing that students should emerge from college able to "clearly and effectively exchange information, ideas, facts, and perspectives with persons inside and outside of an organization." But beyond a career, strong communication and effective dialogue is the foundation for a fulfilling life, and a healthy society – the more capable our students are of engaging meaningfully with others across a variety of contexts, the better equipped they will be to handle the myriad challenges of modern life. We arrived at this requirement collectively and would be remiss not to clarify that courses which cover *Communication and Dialogue* can stem from a range of academic disciplines and perspectives in CLAS – none of our proposed requirements are designed to be limited to one (or even just a handful) of disciplines. Further, we distinguish courses in Communication and Dialogue from the university Writing competency and First-Year Writing program, which focuses predominantly on effectiveness in one modality and, in many cases, one (academic) form of communicating in that modality. Communication and Dialogue courses should help develop students' abilities across contexts beyond writing.
- To update a current CLAS requirement, we propose that all students complete a course in ***Information, Digital, and Media Literacies (IDML)***. Under the current university requirements, each academic major in the college specifies how students meet an Information Literacy Requirement. Under the Common Curriculum, this category has been broadened to include media and digital literacies, and its significance is explained as such: "If an earlier iteration of the information literacy standard was preoccupied with using baseline digital skills and accessing information, the more pressing concern of IDML is a UConn student's education in more complex thinking through the analysis and evaluation of information and media, and their skilled synthesis in new products and expressions." In CLAS, we feel IDML is paramount for navigating the modern world, though we differ from the Common Curriculum in the implementation of the competency. The Common Curriculum explains that IDML is "infused throughout" the curriculum, whereas we see a need for the college to identify specific courses where some or all of these literacies are

featured and developed. Undoubtedly, each discipline in the college can contribute to this roster of courses, and we hope they will. By offering a clear slate of courses in the college where students will hone these literacies, we hope CLAS will be a leader across the university for fostering skills critical to the information age. This course requirement also aligns with two NACE competencies: Critical Thinking and Technology. Finally, we regard *statistical* literacy as a related essential skill – and we discuss its role in our college requirements in the later passage regarding the Q competency.

- Across both degrees, we noted a need to develop ***Leadership Skills and Ethics*** in CLAS students. The broad collection of coursework offered by the college approaches questions of leadership, problem solving, ethical behavior, and perspective-taking in a variety of ways. We felt it important that CLAS students complete at least one course that addresses these issues – which arise in our personal, professional, and civic lives – as part of their education. This course requirement aligns with three NACE competencies: Leadership, Teamwork, and Career and Self-Development. Once again, we conceive this requirement as a big tent: We hope numerous units will offer courses that address these issues, originating from a variety of academic traditions. We would also welcome some new interdisciplinary developments that could leverage the college’s diverse expertise to create courses that would truly help our students grow in this important set of skills. We also see this requirement as a fantastic opportunity to expand our service-learning offerings.
- For Bachelor of Science students, we include the existing ***B.S. Science requirements***, with the single addition of EARTH 1050 as an option. We explain this in the later passage regarding the Science Courses.

Three Additional Components of our Charge:

1) The Bachelor of Arts Q Requirement

Our Spring, 2023 recommendation addressed the College’s current 9-credit minimum in Q courses (compared to the University’s lesser 6-credit requirement) and discussed a desire to maintain this added requirement, and to further consider students’ needs in the domain of statistics this year. The requirements in the Bachelor of Science degree include at least six Q courses; as such, the 9-credit requirement strictly pertains to the Bachelor of Arts degree. We discussed this matter with the broader CLAS C&C in October of 2023 and found a continued strong appetite to maintain the 9-credit minimum. At the time, we agreed to wait until the University’s Quantitative Competency Working Group had progressed in its efforts to modernize the definition and criteria, to ensure that our recommendation fit the competency’s trajectory. We also entertained the prospect of requiring a course in Statistics on both academic and logistical grounds. Given the support for literacies in the proposed College requirements, the subcommittee felt it essential that CLAS B.A. graduates possess the statistical literacy to interpret quantitative data and assess the quality of quantitative data they encounter in their lives. Requiring a course from the department of Statistics would accomplish this, but the logistics could be prohibitive. After recent conferencing with the Q competency’s working group, however, we feel assured that the new criteria and learning outcomes for Q courses will capture the skills we wish to require in our B.A. program without mandating a course be completed in one particular academic unit. Specifically, the working group has put forth learning outcomes addressing (a) interpreting and (b) evaluating the quality of data that will be expected in all Q courses. We strongly support these learning outcomes, and feel that they ensure our students obtain a level of statistical literacy at the University, especially with our B.A. requiring three additional Q credits. Our proposal also updates the catalog language for the B.A. degree to emphasize that whenever possible, students should complete one Q course in their field of study or a closely related discipline. We hope this will encourage B.A. majors that do not already require students to complete a Q course in the field of study to consider the prospect of doing

so – if or when feasible – in the future. The college should welcome proposals for Q courses from all fields of study, provided they adhere to the standards for the competency set forth by the University.

2) The Second Language Requirement

Our Spring, 2023 recommendation discussed the additional language requirements for CLAS students, and the potential issues the requirement may cause certain students. We approached this issue carefully this year. We began by taking the temperature of the entire C&C through a meeting discussion in the Fall of 2023, and opening our inboxes to more opinions thereafter. A variety of perspectives on the language requirements were shared; most spoke with conviction about the value of the languages to the college curriculum, and the need to maintain the current requirements for our students. We also consulted with the Department of Literatures, Cultures, and Languages, who made a compelling argument for the preservation of current requirements, and formulated a letter outlining their reasons. We have included that letter as an appendix to this recommendation, and encourage all C&C members to review it.

Within our subcommittee, the sentiment in our discussion was unanimous: We feel that the college's language education offerings are critical to the mission of the CLAS, and fully support the current intermediate-level requirement. Language courses – particularly those beyond the introductory level – teach more than just functional communication skills; they promote creative thinking, develop problem-solving skills, and foster deep cultural understanding, all of which are central objectives as set forth in our degree definitions. As we have articulated previously with our College Requirements, we are proud of the unique nature of CLAS and its varied academic programs, and see the college's size and scope as a strength for our students. In CLAS, we offer much to our students, and in return require more from them. Our language requirements are but one component of this arrangement, and not one this subcommittee wishes to singly diminish. We are supported in this approach both inside and outside the university: At UConn, the School of Business has elected to maintain its additional second language requirement at the intermediate level. Across our peer institutions, the College of Arts and Humanities at the University of Maryland College Park requires the intermediate level of language, while Tufts University's School of Arts and Sciences requires six semesters of language courses. Likewise, Arts and Sciences colleges at all three of our aspirant institutions (Ohio State University, University of California-Davis, and University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign) require at least 12 credits of study in a single language. We are in good company with our requirement, which further supports our committee's sentiments.

The final question, then, concerns the disparate effect of the CLAS requirement on students who don't complete their language study in high school. To examine this issue, we networked with both the Office of the Registrar and the Office of Undergraduate Admissions. Neither had the capacity or capability to part out demographic or high school data for who meets and who does not meet the language requirements through high school, which limited our ability to study the issue at a granular level. They did, however, return data on the scope of the issue. Table 2 presents data on the number of incoming students who had yet to complete the language requirement across each campus, dating back to 2016.

Table 2. New Students Entering the University without Second-Language Requirements Met

Campus	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Avery Pt.	34 14.8%	32 14.9%	22 10.9%	23 11.7%	30 13.7%	28 13.4%	32 17.6%	32 18.4%
Hartford	53 11.7%	45 8.6%	54 8.6%	53 8.4%	74 11.1%	67 12.1%	84 13.6%	78 14.3%
Stamford	45 12.3%	73 13.0%	121 18.3%	88 13.0%	110 14.1%	112 14.7%	137 20.9%	120 19.3%
Storrs	223	144	181	169	207	267	296	371

	5.8%	3.9%	4.8%	4.7%	5.4%	7.3%	7.3%	8.9%
Waterbury	38	28	50	35	52	31	36	68
	15.3%	9.0%	15.9%	14.8%	14.6%	11.4%	15.0%	28.0%
Total	393	322	428	368	473	505	585	669
	7.7%	6.1%	7.7%	6.9%	8.1%	9.2%	10.1%	11.6%

We made two primary observations in the data above. First, the relative number of students entering the University without having met the language requirement is small, ranging from 6.1% to 11.6%. This number gets smaller once accounting for students who later test out of the requirement or obtain a waiver. Second, it appears that the Covid 19 Pandemic had an impact on this requirement; the number of students who entered without all language requirements rose steadily from 2021 through 2023, and especially at the regional campuses. Using enrollment and degree conferral data, we can expect the CLAS “additional” language requirements to apply to about 45% of all UConn students – that represents 227 students missing the requirement who entered in 2021, 263 in 2022, and 301 students in 2023. These projected numbers may also be overstated; 80% of CLAS students study at the Storrs campus, but Storrs admits only represented 53% of the students missing the requirement over the past three years. We are optimistic that the number of impacted students will recede as we begin to admit students whose high school careers weren’t impacted by the pandemic. We also think it vital that the University take additional steps with local high schools to ensure that students are aware of the second language requirements (across the whole University) so they can enroll in three years of high school courses accordingly whenever possible. Finally, we echo the suggestion offered by the department of Literatures, Cultures, and Languages that CLAS count the [Seal of Biliiteracy](#) as equivalent to completing the intermediate level of a language, rather than just the introductory level, and thus sufficing the steeper requirement. In this recommendation, we maintain the intermediate level language requirement, but have included the Seal as a new option for satisfying the college requirement.

3. The Science Courses Framework: Adding One Option

Our approach to the college requirements necessitated some level of review of the science courses, though this was not, admittedly, our central focus. We support the existing B.S. requirements in Chemistry, Mathematics, Biology, and Physics as foundational structures for a conventional Bachelor of Science plan of study. It is apparent, though, that many of our peer and aspirant institutions offer more specialized requirements across their collections of B.S. programs. Should a sentiment arise to revisit these requirements in totality, we encourage the CLAS C&C to charge a robust subcommittee with representation from several B.S.-granting programs (and at least one non-B.S.-granting program) to consider those questions thoroughly and carefully.

We do propose one change to the science course options, however. We propose the addition of EARTH 1050, *Earth’s Dynamic Environment*, as an option alongside BIOL 1107, 1108, and 1110. EARTH 1050 is a 4.00-credit laboratory course dealing with the origin and history of planet Earth. The course emphasizes how rock, air, water, and life interact at different scales to shape Earth’s landforms, life systems, natural resources, and environment. Our college 2020-2025 Strategic Plan identified a key academic theme as “The Earth and its future.” That future includes confronting issues such as climate change, environmental justice, natural resource limitation, clean water, clean energy, environmental health, and ecosystem collapse. In EARTH 1050, Students learn how the earth works as a coherent system, providing them an enhanced sense of place and time, and an understanding of the physical scientific basis for how Earth’s atmosphere, hydrosphere, biosphere, and geosphere have changed through time and function together to build a habitable planet.

CLAS students pursuing a Bachelor of Science come from a broad range of majors in varied disciplines and may derive equal benefit from expertise in the earth and life sciences. As an example, students pursuing advanced or graduate-level work in climate, atmospheres, or water chemistry may require preparation in coursework focused on understanding the water cycle and the interaction between soils, rock, and groundwater - all of which is covered in EARTH 1050. In contrast, students who wish to pursue graduate work in biochemistry or molecular biology may derive benefit from the BIOL 1107 or 1108 courses, while students pursuing graduate work in ecosystems may see greater benefit from satisfying the approved course in Botany, BIOL 1110. Many other institutions - such as undergraduate competitor UMass-Amherst - embrace a more flexible approach and simply require two courses in the biological or physical world, giving students greater flexibility within a range of courses to satisfy this requirement. We strongly recommend the inclusion of an Earth Science course as a small, positive step toward such flexibility, and would encourage our B.S.-offering programs to consider other options for broadening requirements at a future juncture.

Operating Principles of the CLAS Course Requirements

To translate our proposed course requirements into practice requires establishing some rules that will shape student plans of study and advising in the college. Here we outline those rules.

1. CLAS requirements in the Topics of Inquiry.

- a. Courses in these requirements are overseen by the Common Curriculum Committee.
- b. B.A. students must complete 12 credits of coursework across TOI 2 and TOI 5; these courses may be used toward meeting the “focus area” requirement of the Common Curriculum.
- c. B.S. students must complete 9 credits of coursework across TOI 2 and TOI 5.
- d. Both B.A. and B.S. students must complete 6 credits of coursework in TOI 3; these courses may be used toward meeting the “focus area” requirement of the Common Curriculum.

2. College-specific course requirements: Communication, IDML, & Leadership Skills and Ethics.

- a. Management: The process of establishing courses in each of these requirement categories will be overseen by a subcommittee of the CLAS C&C. The subcommittee will review courses that request to be counted in one of these categories using the criteria in the Guiding Principles document attached to this recommendation. This process will be kept simple to reduce burdens on units and the C&C as much as possible. The subcommittee’s recommendations will be voted on by the full CLAS C&C. At the end of the establishment period (AY 24-25) the membership of the CLAS C&C will determine whether a standing subcommittee is needed for future alignments, or if this process should be folded into the committee’s regular business (as occurs with CA1 A through E designations in the current system.)
- b. Exclusivity: Only CLAS courses will be included in these CLAS requirement categories. A course may only be included in one of the three categories; units should select the category most suitable for the course’s content. Units are free to align several of their courses to categories. Courses aligned to these categories may or may not also be aligned to the Common Curriculum.
- c. Load: At least three credits of coursework must be completed in each of the three categories.
- d. Addressing potential triple-dipping:

- i. B.A. Students may not count courses they use to meet these category requirements as part of their Common Curriculum Topic of Inquiry requirements and credits. Due to the credit load in the science requirements, B.S. students may use one course that applies to their Common Curriculum Topic of Inquiry requirements to suffice a college-specific requirement.
 - ii. Q and W courses may count to suffice the CLAS requirement categories.
- e. Breadth: Courses used to meet these three requirements must come from at least three different subject codes. A student will be permitted to use two courses from the same subject code within these requirements if one of those courses is crosslisted in another subject code not otherwise used to meet this requirement. Students may complete CLAS requirement courses from subject codes already used to meet Common Curriculum requirements.

3. Carry-Over from the outgoing system:

- a. The CLAS Second Language Requirement and Q Requirement (for B.A. students) will continue to be managed under the same principles and policies as currently used.
- b. The CLAS B.S. Science Requirements will continue to be managed under the same principles and policies as currently used.
 - i. Likewise, approvals for “alternative” plans of study from the B.S. in Economics and the B.S. in Statistical Data Science shall be upheld. Other than the specific (science-based) plan of study changes already approved for these degree programs, they are subject to the policies set forth for B.S. students in this document.

Our rationale for the policies of interest is shared below:

- We designed a process for populating the three CLAS college requirement categories during AY 24-25. We emphasize that this process should be as straightforward as possible for units and the C&C; we do not wish to reenact the herculean tasks of the Common Curriculum migration, and feel that we can manage this process efficiently. As an example, we’d expect units to offer a paragraph of rationale explaining how the course meets the criteria outlined in the Guiding Principles document, and include a syllabus that shows how the criteria are covered in the course and part of student assessment. We do not anticipate this process would require the CAR system, nor any approvals beyond the CLAS C&C. We must stress our desire for simplicity, efficiency, and organization in this process: we recognize how busy our units are managing other curricular and administrative tasks.
- We feel a subcommittee will be necessary to manage this process while the course lists for each category are being established; we’re unsure if that subcommittee will be necessary in future years, or if courses being ‘added’ to the categories can be managed through regular C&C business, and set that as an item for discussion of the full C&C in the Spring of 2025.
- The purpose of the college requirements is to further expose students to the diverse strengths and expertise of our numerous academic units while they develop their knowledge and skills in areas of modern importance. To that end, only CLAS courses will be the courses used to suffice these requirements. We appreciate the offerings of the many programs offered outside of the college, but we see these requirements as a way to further connect our units (‘college,’ from the Latin *collegium*, meaning association) in the creation of a holistic education.
 - In a similar vein, to promote breadth of experience, we’ve ensured that students complete the three college-specific requirements in different subject codes, and that no course can suffice more than one of the requirements. We did not require the three subject codes to be

- new* subject codes from those students selected in the Common Curriculum, however; we feared the impacts of such a restriction on advising and student matriculation.
- We do not want the act of meeting the college-specific requirements to become an exercise in gen-ed gymnastics; as such, we stipulate that the three courses used to complete these requirements generally not be used to meet the Common Curriculum requirements. We allow a single exception for B.S. students, who can ‘double dip’ one Common Curriculum course into their three college-specific requirements. We consider this one exception a step to offset the additional burden placed on B.S. students by the science course requirements.
 - We want to note, however, that both Common Curriculum and non-Common Curriculum courses can be aligned with the college-specific requirement categories.

Packaging the College Requirements: The CLAS COLLEGE Requirements

We spent a significant amount of time creating and reviewing these requirements, and realized in the process that we could easily package the requirements when promoting them to our students. We propose packaging this proposal as **The CLAS COLLEGE Requirements**:

- **CO:** Communication and Dialogue (1 course)
- **L:** Literacies
 - Information, Digital, and Media Literacy (1 Course)
 - Statistical Literacy (one extra Q course)
- **LE:** Leadership Skills and Ethics (1 course)
- **GE:** Enhanced Study in General Education
 - Social and Cultural Studies (3 courses in TOI 2 or 5 for B.A.; 2 courses for B.S.)
 - Diversity, Equity, and Social Justice (2 courses in TOI 3)

We think this packaging will make advising easier, and help students more readily understand the requirements. We also include a prospective Plan of Study template, alongside courses that may align with the requirement categories, to better illustrate the COLLEGE requirements in action.

Degrees of Freedom: Process for Alternative Plans of Study

The process of determining the CLAS COLLEGE requirements has helped us to consider the College’s B.A. and B.S. degrees as related but distinct offerings uniquely affiliated with the college’s mission, vision, and values. That said, CLAS is a big tent, and the idea that all units could ever come to consensus on a one-size fits all solution for their degree programs is optimistic at best. It was important to us to advocate a framework that we feel prepares our students for their personal, civic, and professional lives; it was also important to us to ensure that, when units’ curricular aspirations do not perfectly align with this framework, they have recourse to implement their own requirements.

In 2016, when units expressed an interest in offering B.S. degrees that didn’t follow the traditional science course requirements, the CLAS C&C approved a procedure (11/8/16) for reviewing such proposals. In that procedure, the Chair of the C&C would charge a subcommittee (consisting of four members from B.S.-granting programs, and one member from a non-B.S.-granting program) to review the proposal. The subcommittee would seek to ensure that the proposal met the levels of rigor, breadth, and depth present in other CLAS B.S. degrees, and would work with the authoring unit to make edits as necessary to accomplish these goals. Ultimately, the subcommittee would present its recommendation to the full CLAS C&C, who would then review and ultimately vote on the proposed program change. This procedure was successfully used to shepherd the proposal for the Bachelor of Science in Economics (2017) and the Bachelor of Science

in Statistical Data Science (2022). We recommend that this procedure be broadened to account for degree program changes for both the Bachelor of Arts and Bachelor of Science degrees, to allow for programs to deviate where and when necessary. While we hope this will not be a frequent occurrence, we feel that this standardizes the procedure across all degree programs: An individual program can vary from one or more requirements set forth by the college, pending successful careful review from a qualified audience of peers in the college, and then the overall CLAS C&C. To this end, we recommend the following procedure, adapted from the 11/8/16 document, be adopted by the C&C:

Alternative Degree Requirements

Departments and degree programs may submit a proposal to the CLAS Committee on Curricula and Courses (CLAS C&C) to change one or more of the college requirements for new or revised B.A or B.S. degrees.

- Proposals to change the requirements for a B.A. degree are reviewed by the Bachelor of Arts (B.A.) subcommittee of the CLAS C&C, formed by the Chair of the C&C, and those that are approved by a majority vote will be put forward for approval by the full C&C committee. The B.A. Subcommittee will consist of four representatives from different departments currently offering B.A. degrees within CLAS, and one additional member from a department that does not currently offer a B.A. degree. Proposals will be evaluated to ensure their suitability to the CLAS B.A. definition as articulated in the course catalog, and to ensure that the intent is to attain the same level of rigor and depth as other CLAS B.A. degrees. The required level of breadth will provide the foundation necessary and appropriate to the field of study, and the proposal must provide sufficient diversity in coursework to permit students to engage a range of subject matter and excel in meeting a variety of challenges.
- Proposals to change the requirements for a B.S. degree are reviewed by the Bachelor of Science (B.S.) Subcommittee of the CLAS C&C, formed by the Chair of the C&C, and those that are approved by a majority vote will be put forward for approval by the full C&C committee. The B.S. Subcommittee will consist of four representatives from different departments currently offering B.S. degrees within CLAS, and one additional member from a department that does not currently offer a B.S. degree. Proposals will be evaluated to ensure their suitability to the CLAS B.S. definition as articulated in the course catalog. A broad definition of science will be applied: "Science is the pursuit and application of knowledge and understanding of the natural and social world following a systematic methodology based on evidence" (The Science Council, 2009). Proposals will be evaluated to ensure that the intent is to attain the same level of rigor and depth as other CLAS B.S. degrees. The required level of breadth will provide the scientific foundation necessary and appropriate to the field of study, and will provide sufficient diversity in courses covering theory, experimental/observational methods and quantitative analysis.

For all proposals, requirements may be achieved through specification of the Common Curriculum requirements and/or some Related Area courses. Consideration will also be given to

degree requirements in the same discipline at peer institutions. Once approved, any modified B.A. or B.S. requirements will be listed in the Catalog alongside the description of the major.

We feel this policy affords flexibility to potential new programs that may necessitate different requirements, and permits existing programs to make an argument to alter a specific requirement that does not meet their curricular needs. We also imagine that, for both the B.A. and B.S., an examination of proposals to deviate from the COLLEGE requirements will be instructive for the CLAS C&C to identify areas where change is needed in the future.

Recommendation to the CLAS C&C

Having explicated our process, research, proposals, and rationale in this document, we make the following recommendation to the CLAS C&C, with all actions effective academic year 25-26:

1. Amend the catalog entry for the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences to include the included preamble and definitions for the Bachelor of Arts Degree and Bachelor of Science degrees.
2. In the Common Curriculum:
 - a. Require CLAS B.A. students to complete 12 total credits across Topics of Inquiry 2 and 5, and CLAS B.S. students to complete 9 total credits across Topics of Inquiry 2 and 5.
 - b. Require all CLAS students to complete 6 total credits in Topic of Inquiry 3.
3. Within the CLAS Curriculum, and beyond students' Common Curriculum requirements:
 - a. Require students to complete 3 credits in Communication and Dialogue, selected from a roster of approved courses in the college curriculum.
 - b. Require students to complete 3 credits in Information, Digital, and Media Literacy, selected from a roster of approved courses in the college curriculum.
 - c. Require students to complete 3 credits in Leadership Skills and Ethics, selected from a roster of approved courses in the college curriculum.
 - d. Require students to complete these requirements with courses from three different subject codes as specified in this document. Permit B.S. students (only) to count one course used to fulfill the Common Curriculum to satisfy a college-level requirement category.
4. Have the Chair charge a subcommittee to manage the review and approval of courses to align into the three CLAS requirement categories during the 2024-25 academic year, using the Guiding Principles document. All subcommittee recommendations should be voted on by the full C&C at regular meetings. In spring 2025, have the full committee discuss the utility of keeping the subcommittee into subsequent years.
5. Uphold the 9-credit minimum for CLAS students in the Quantitative Competency.
6. Uphold the intermediate-level Second Language requirement for CLAS students, and include the Seal of Bilingualism as an option for completing the requirement.
7. Add EARTH 1050 to the science requirements as an option alongside BIOL 1107, 1108, and 1110.
8. Amend the 11/8/16 CLAS C&C document as specified in this recommendation to become a procedure by which both B.A. and B.S. programs can seek to deviate their requirements from that of the college, pending successful review by the alternative degree subcommittee on grounds of breadth, depth, and rigor.

We urge the CLAS C&C to adopt our recommendations as a whole, so that the college can move forward successfully into the era of the Common Curriculum.

Respectfully,
The CLAS C&C Subcommittee on General Education
Ariana Codr, *Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies*
Elena Comay del Junco, *Philosophy*
Frank Griggs, *Political Science*
Michael Hren, *Earth Science*
Matthew McKenzie, *American Studies, History*
Mansour Ndiaye, *Assistant Dean, CLAS*
Anne Oeldorf-Hirsch, *Communication*
Fatma Selampinar, *Chemistry*
Stephen Stifano, *Chair, CLAS C&C*
Evelyn Tribble, *Associate Dean, CLAS*