COLLEGE OF BUSINESS
University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign

The Report of the
Core Curriculum Committee

March 1, 2004

Committee Members:

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Core Curriculum Committee Report

Executive Summary

The Core Curriculum Committee (CCC) was appointed by Dean Avijit Ghosh in August 2003 and was charged to review the current undergraduate business core curriculum and suggest changes and modifications that will move the College closer to its goal for undergraduate business education, which is to provide “... the highest quality education to a large and diverse group of students.”

The CCC met throughout the Fall 2003 semester. Inputs of information from students, faculty, peer schools, student advisors, the AACSB, and our business constituency were considered. Also considered were recommendations made by four other core curriculum review committees that deliberated over the past 17 years.

The current (2003) undergraduate business core has been substantially the same for the last twenty years. In the face of rapid changes in business practices and technology over the last two decades, the CCC decided that certain changes to the undergraduate business core are needed.

CCC recommends that the undergraduate business core be retained (Recommendation #1) and makes 13 additional recommendations in three areas:

Recommendations for Business Core Content Changes

2. **Introduction to Business:** This newly designed course will be taught in the Freshman year and introduce students to the study of business, set the bar for academic expectations in the College, and provide a cohort-building experience.

3. **Developing student computer skills:** Eliminate CS 105 as a requirement. Develop three separate modules to teach desired computer skills. They are:
   - Spreadsheet computing (Excel)
   - Data bases and data management (Access)
   - Business applications development (Visual Basic)

4. **Mathematics:** Change the current requirement to one calculus course *taken on this campus.*

5. **Economics:** Change the current Economics requirement to two courses, Econ 103 Principles of Macro combined with Econ 2XX (4 hrs), a redesigned Econ 300, Intermediate Micro.
6. **Statistics:** Replace the Econ 172-173 sequence with a single 4-hour course on Business Statistics, XXX 273.

7. **Business Communications:** Eliminate the current SpCom 101 core requirement. Create a Business Communications Center (BCC) in the College of Business to develop and implement a business communications curriculum that will be implemented in one or more major core courses in each department major. This curriculum will have emphases on written communication and presentation skills.

8. **Management of Information Technology:** Create a new core course, BA 3XX, with a title similar to “Management of Information Technology.”

9. **Business Processes:** Create a new core course, BA 3XX, with a title similar to “Business Process Management.”

### Recommendations on the Administration of the Undergraduate Core

10. **Business core leadership.** Fill the position of Associate Dean for Undergraduate Programs.

11. **Faculty oversight of the core.** Create a Business Core Council of College of Business faculty to provide oversight, integration, and continuous improvement of core courses.

12. **Business core course information for students and faculty.** Create a core web site containing information for all faculty and students on knowledge, skills, and attitudes to be developed in each core course.

### Recommendations on Pedagogy in the Core and Core Course Relationship to Major Courses

13. **Business ethics, international business, and critical thinking skills.** Establish systematic coverage of business ethics, international business, and building critical thinking skills through the (functional) core courses.

14. **Core courses relationship to major courses.** Departments should reconsider their major courses (especially major core courses) in light of recommended changes to the core.

Finally, CCC proposes a phased implementation schedule of these recommended changes that begins with the Fall 2005 semester with implementation completed in the 2007-2008 academic year.
INTRODUCTION

All undergraduate students in the College of Business are required to take a common set of courses called the business core. These courses, combined with campus general education requirements and departmental major requirements (see Appendix 1), prepare our students for careers in business and public service. The business core courses constitute nearly 40% of the required credit hours to obtain a degree in business. These core courses consist of content and methods to enable our students to develop their analytical skills and knowledge of business needed by all business students regardless of specific major.

To ensure that the College provides “...the highest quality education to a large and diverse group of students,” it is imperative that the business core be kept up to date with respect to the relevancy of its content and pedagogy.

Dean Avijit Ghosh appointed the Core Curriculum Committee (CCC) in September 2003 and provided the following charge:

A defining characteristic of a preeminent educational institution is a commitment to an on-going program of curriculum evaluation, program enhancements, and teaching innovations. Business education faces a major challenge keeping programs relevant in a rapidly changing business environment. The current, required set of courses that all BUS students must take, the Business Core, has been evaluated by several taskforces over the years. Many recommendations have been made but, for multiple reasons, few have been implemented.

To ensure the University of Illinois College of Business continues to provide high quality and relevant education to its undergraduate students, I have asked Professor Morgan Lynge to chair a committee to evaluate the current undergraduate core. The Undergraduate Core Curriculum Committee will examine the Business Core in the context of the educational needs of undergraduate Business students today. The committee will review the current core curriculum and suggest changes and modifications as required. It will also review the recommendations of previous curriculum task forces, update those recommendations, as appropriate, and develop a plan for implementation of
recommended changes. Throughout the process it will seek input from faculty, students and other stakeholders.

In undertaking this task we must be guided by our goal to prepare future leaders of business and public service around the world by delivering the highest quality education to a large and diverse group of students. As the common set of courses that all business students must take, the Committee must determine the appropriate set of courses for the Business Core to accomplish this educational goal.

The Dean requested a report from the Committee by the end of the Fall 2003 semester.

The composition of the Core Curriculum Committee is:
Morgan J. Lynge, Chair
Marjorie Shelley, Accountancy
Clif Brown, Accountancy
George Monahan, Business Administration
Joe Mahoney, Business Administration
Mike Shaw, Business Administration
Mike Dyer, Finance
Virginia France, Finance
Jo Duchene, Assistant Dean, Undergraduate Programs
Jennifer Dolan, Student
Mark Zelasko, Student
Billy Nand, Student
BACKGROUND AND HISTORY

The College of Business undergraduate programs have been highly ranked for many years. *U.S. News & World Report* rankings of UIUC undergraduate business program over time are:

- 2003: 11th (tied)
- 2002: 9th (tied)
- 2001: 10th (tied)
- 1999: 10th (tied)
- 1995: 7th (tied)

*U.S. News & World Report* also ranked top 25 individual undergraduate programs in 2003:

- Accountancy 1st
- Business management 13th
- Finance 11th
- Insurance and risk management 5th
- Real estate 7th
- Management information systems 18th
- Marketing 10th

Rankings of undergraduate programs are a relatively recent phenomenon but are likely to continue into the future. Given the talent of the undergraduate students coming to our College of Business, we should be doing much better in rankings of this type. The UIUC undergraduate rankings, while solid, are subject to erosion as competitor programs use substantive program changes, often in combination with new facilities, to bolster their undergraduate business program rankings. It is our challenge as a College to go beyond the mere formulation of good ideas and to put into action a well-advised and thoughtful plan to strengthen our undergraduate programs, update them, and pay significant attention to pedagogy to restore them to their place as the “jewel in the crown.”

Previous task forces and recommendations

The business core has been evaluated by several committees and task forces over the last 16 years. These groups have included:

- CBA Core Curriculum Revision Task Force, 1997-1998 (Chaired by Leblebici)*
- CBA Curriculum Review Committee, 1994-1996 (Ziegler)
- CBA Curriculum Review Committee, 1991-1993 (Gentry)
- CBA Curriculum Review Committee, 1987-1989 (Leuthold)

* This was one of three task forces established to review the college’s undergraduate program. The other two task forces had a focus on (1) service delivery and (2) major curricula.
Each of these groups recommended revisions in the business core, but there has been no substantial revision to the content of the business core since the addition of a strategy course (B Adm 389) over 20 years ago. CCC was charged to take into account the recommendations made by these groups.

**Should there be a business core? What is its purpose?**

By its very definition, a business core exists to ensure that business students learn certain knowledge, skills, and attitudes that are common both to all major academic programs in business (i.e. are used in upper level major courses) and to the successful pursuit of a career in business or public service.

There is a view that most, if not all, of these skills, knowledge, and attitudes are best learned if they are taught in conjunction with subject matter material in the area of the student’s major, and thus their teaching should be integrated in major courses. That is, the business core should not exist or, at the least, should consist only of a few basic level courses (e.g. in mathematics).

CCC has concluded that current college resources prohibit a move to the teaching of all (or most) core material in integrated major courses and recommends that the concept of the business core, and the economies of scale it provides, must be maintained (with one exception; see recommendation #7 on Business Communications).

**Content of a business core. Whose views were considered?**

If there is to be a business core, what should be its content? AACSB, our accrediting agency, no longer requires that certain specific courses be included in a business core, as it had done for many years. Yet AACSB does provide a list of “topics typically found in general management degree programs.” CCC took this list into account as well as AACSB’s itemized knowledge and skill areas that should be produced by an undergraduate degree program in business.

The requirements of AACSB were supplemented by a list, created by CCC, of knowledge, skills, and attitudes that our students should possess or have acquired by the time they finish an undergraduate degree program in business.

Three members of CCC were students in the College of Business who provided student views about the effectiveness of the business core they and their fellow students had experienced. Assistant Dean Jo Duchene and selected faculty members on CCC had extensive experience advising students and were able to tell the Committee of their experiences working with students taking core business courses and how students perceived the current core courses.
Faculty members of CCC who had taught undergraduate students had prior views and attitudes about the effectiveness of the existing BUS core.

To provide information on the choices of peer schools regarding their business cores, CCC considered information from ten peer schools. Five of these were Big 10 schools (Indiana, Iowa, Michigan, Penn State, and Wisconsin) and the other five were from other parts of the country (California Berkeley, Carnegie Mellon, NYU Stern, North Carolina at Chapel Hill, and Texas at Austin). Tables with peer school data are at Appendix 3.

All faculty members of CCC had anecdotal evidence of the stated preferences of corporate recruiters who seek to hire graduates of the undergraduate business program. Many of those preferences had more to do with individual student skills, attitudes, and maturity than with specific knowledge or content of their academic programs.

As CCC considered the content of the current business core and how it succeeded or failed to generate the desired outcomes, ideas to change the core surfaced. At times CCC invited guests to make presentations to the Committee on various aspects of the business core. Invited guests included:

- Dilip Chhajed to speak to a course on business processes
- Larry DeBrock to speak to the teaching of economics in the core
- Susan Cohen to speak to the teaching of business statistics in the core
- John Hedeman to sketch out an Introduction to Business course
- Joanne Slutsky to speak to teaching business communications skills

RECOMMENDATIONS REGARDING THE BUSINESS CORE

Recommendations of the Committee fall into three areas: (1) changes to the content of the business core; (2) administration of the business core; and (3) the pedagogy of teaching core courses and the relationship between the core courses and departmental majors.

A spreadsheet showing the recommended (changed) business core is at Appendix 2.

1. **Retain the Business Core.** Retain a set of courses designated as the business core and required for all College of Business students.

   **Discussion.** A business core contains a set of courses that teach business students knowledge, skills, and attitudes that are common for all areas of business. CCC believes that there are sufficient core or common areas that are essential and that add value for all BUS students. The economies of scale that are afforded by core courses cannot be minimized and should continue to be captured.
Recommendations for Business Core Content Changes

2. **Introduction to Business:** This newly designed course will be taught in the Freshman year and introduce students to the study of business, set the bar for academic expectations in the College, and provide a cohort-building experience.

**Discussion.** New Freshmen in the College of Business may take an Economics course during the Freshman year, but typically will not begin taking courses from BUS until they take Accountancy 201 and 202 and, perhaps, one or two other Business Administration or Finance courses near the end of the Sophomore year. In other words, the connection between our students and our College begins on a weak or nonexistent note. The Department of Accountancy, which is usually the first BUS department to enroll these students in a BUS course, has tried to enrich Accy 201 and 202 to help students learn about “business.” Still, there is no forum, at the beginning of a BUS student’s academic career, where it is possible to provide the big picture describing what business is about, what the College has to offer academically and experientially, and what the College’s expectations are for students in Business.

CCC recommends that a new course be designed, tentatively designated as Business 100 (BUS 100), to remedy some of these shortcomings. While CCC does not advance a specific syllabus for the course, recommended topics for the course include (1) what the economic model for business is, (2) how business fits into and serves society, and (3) what functions businesses perform. Building skills such as leadership and communications may be started in this course. Business ethics should be a topic of discussion. The objective for this course, besides getting business students connected to their College, is to convey the overall picture of business and how the core courses and major courses to be taken later will fit into this picture.

**Previous recommendations.** The 1988 Task Force (on Service Delivery Processes) recommended that a similar course be designed and implemented.

3. **Developing student computer skills:** Eliminate CS 105 as a requirement. Develop three separate modules to teach desired computer skills. They are:
   - Spreadsheet computing (Excel)
   - Data bases and data management (Access)
   - Business applications development (Visual Basic)

Offer proficiency exams so students already having these skills can demonstrate their proficiency and place out of any or all modules.

**Discussion.** The computer skills business students and graduates need to have to be successful has probably changed more rapidly than any other area of business.
Business students need certain computer skills to access applications taught in higher level business courses, and they need a facility with computers and software in most careers they will pursue. For many years, CS 105 has been the course we have depended on to assure that our students have certain minimum skills in this area. The content of CS 105 has changed considerably over time from a purely programming course (in the Pascal language) with a focus on mainframe computing to one that presents rudiments of spreadsheet, database, and programming (Visual Basic) with a personal computer.

CS 105 has been a lightning rod of criticism and complaints from business students and business faculty for a long period of time. While the Department of Computer Science has periodically sought input from BUS on the desired content of CS 105, and has periodically revised the content, CCC believes that the College must take control of the teaching in the area of computer skills. The Department of Computer Science desires (1) not to teach a computer software skills course and (2) to reduce the resources it expends on CS 105.

Each module would carry one hour of credit. Credit could be earned by passing a proficiency test for any or all modules. CCC has no views on the administrative structure of the modules or who would teach the modules except that the modules need to be approved “courses” in order to offer academic credit. Additional or revised modules may be developed in the future to (1) serve the specific computer skill needs of certain business majors and (2) incorporate new developments in computer software programs or packages.

**Previous recommendations.** The 1998 Task Force recommended the retention of CS 105 as a core course, a renegotiation of the content of the course, and the designation of BUS liaison with the CS Department to coordinate the relationship between BUS and CS. CCC believes that the proposed modular approach offers the flexibility needed to ensure that our students have the needed computer skills.

4. **Mathematics:** Change the current requirement to one calculus course **taken on this campus**.

**Discussion.** The view of CCC was that while the mathematics background of most of our students is adequate, many students seemed unable to apply math tools to business problems in their classes. One reason for this state of affairs is that many of our incoming freshmen have satisfied part or all of the minimum mathematics requirement via advanced placement (AP) classes they have taken in high school. A second reason is that too much time elapses between taking a calculus course and then taking a business course that may use calculus.

The intent of this recommendation is to address the first reason. Students will be required to take a calculus course on this campus. The minimum requirement is completion of Math 120, Calculus and Analytic Geometry I. If a student has
already earned AP credit for Math 120, then that student can take Math 130 to meet the recommended core requirement. For students who wish to continue their mathematics education, Math 120 (or 130) provides an entrée to a significant sequence of additional mathematics courses.

The pedagogy recommendations below address the use of calculus in business core and major classes.

**Previous recommendations.** The 1998 Task Force did not recommend any changes to the Business core math requirement.

5. **Economics:** Change the current Economics requirement to two courses, Econ 103 Principles of Macro combined with Econ 2XX (4 hrs), a redesigned Econ 300, Intermediate Micro.

**Discussion.** The Committee seeks to build in all BUS students a solid foundation in Economics consisting of principles of macroeconomics and a deeper understanding of microeconomics. The proposal calls for retention of the current principles of macroeconomics (Econ 103) and the combination of the current two courses in microeconomics (102 and 300) into one four-hour course, Econ 2XX. Pedagogically, the Committee believes that the topics of microeconomics could be taught once, perhaps in both graphical and mathematical forms, in a course designed specifically for BUS students, probably during the Sophomore year. This new course will build on the exposure to business that BUS students obtain in BUS 100 during the Freshman year, and could make use of calculus skills which BUS students will have obtained during the Freshman year.

**Previous recommendations.** The 1998 Task Force recommended a two-course sequence in Economics consisting of Econ 101 and Econ 300. The recommendation above is similar but envisions accomplishing a similar goal in a slightly different configuration.

6. **Statistics:** Replace the Econ 172-173 sequence with a single 4-hour course on Business Statistics, XXX 273.

**Discussion.** As was the case with BUS student math skills, it is a common complaint that BUS students seem unable to retain and apply skills learned in required statistics classes. Therefore the Committee decided to recommend a single redesigned business statistics course that is heavy on applications. It is believed that the necessary topics of probability, statistics, and regression can be adequately covered in one expanded (to four credit hours) course. The course would make use of popular software applications, like Excel, and require the students to use actual data to learn the use of statistics in business and decision-making.
Previous recommendations. The 1998 Task Force recommended only that the existing two-course sequence be revised to better meet the decision-making skills our students will need in their major.

7. Business Communications: Eliminate the current SpCom 101 core requirement. Create a Business Communications Center (BCC) in the College of Business to develop and implement a business communications curriculum that will be implemented in one or more major core courses in each department major. This curriculum will have emphases on written communication and presentation skills.

Discussion. Faculty and corporate recruiters frequently emphasize the necessity for our students to have improved communications skills. Currently there exists no systematic mechanism for our students to develop communications skills for business (with the exception of Accountancy students—see below). SpCom 101 is a course with a large number of sections taught by TAs in which students learn about and practice skills related to making speeches. Campus general education requirements require all students to take an “advanced” writing course. Some of our students take a Business and Technical Writing course such as B&TW 250, Principles of Business Writing, to meet this requirement. However, this course does not have sufficient capacity to handle all BUS students.

The Committee view is that learning business communications skills is most effectively accomplished in business (major) courses. The Department of Accountancy has taken this approach in its Discovery curriculum in that all Accountancy students receive instruction and then produce written and oral work that is evaluated for effective communication. The Committee recommends a similar approach for all BUS students. Key required courses in each major would be selected for a business communications emphasis. Staff of the BCC would provide business communications training connected to these courses (perhaps in one-credit hour workshop appended to these major classes) and would evaluate the effectiveness of writing and presentations produced as work for these key courses. At least one of these key courses in each major should be submitted to the General Education Board for approval to meet the campus Advanced Composition general education requirement.

Previous recommendations. The 1998 Task Force made no recommendations in the area of business communications.

8. Management of Information Technology: Create a new core course, BA 3XX, with a title similar to “Management of Information Technology.”

Discussion. The focus of this new course is on data management and decision support systems, enterprise applications and software development, accounting
and financial systems management, knowledge management and business intelligence, enterprise information resource management, web-based management, information security, privacy and ethics, and IT and corporate strategy alignment.

Nearly all firms and organizations today have to deal with technology in the management of their businesses and activities. CCC believes that it is (past) time for there to be a core course that has a focus on the use of technology in business and the management issues surrounding the use of technology. The proposed new course is not just an introductory MIS course, which five of the peer schools include in their cores. Instead, it has a focus on the management issues surrounding information technology. Only Indiana, among the peer schools, has such a course.

CCC views this new core course as an important mechanism to move UIUC to the forefront of modern undergraduate business education, update our BUS core, comply with AACSB guidelines, and better prepare our undergraduate students to work in businesses and organizations, all of whom rely on technology to manage their organizations.

**Previous recommendations.** The 1998 Task Force recommended a similar new course for the BUS core.

9. **Business Processes:** Create a new core course, BA 3XX, with a title similar to “Business Process Management.”

**Discussion.** The focus of this new course is on processes involved in delivering goods and services to the marketplace. The course should provide in-depth coverage of the decisions involved in designing and managing effective and efficient processes. Eight of our ten peer schools include an Operations Management course in their cores. The proposed course is not an old-style operations management course, but instead deals with all of the processes involved in producing and getting a product or service to market.

AACSB guidelines indicate that an undergraduate program should include learning experiences in such management-specific knowledge and skills areas as “Creation of value through the integrated production and distribution of goods, services, and information.” The proposed course is designed to meet this guideline.

**Previous recommendations.** Although previous task forces had recommended that a course in Operations Management be included in the BUS core, the 1998 Task Force did not concur. However, the course under consideration was not as broadly conceived as the course proposed here.
Recommendations on the Administration of the Undergraduate Core

10. **Business core leadership.** Fill the position of Associate Dean for Undergraduate Programs.

**Discussion.** This faculty/administrator will have leadership responsibility for the content, teaching, and continuous improvement of the business core. Since the retirement of Bill Williamson in August 2002, this position has been vacant. As the business core is revised, the College needs administrative leadership to implement the accepted recommendations and to put in place mechanisms for continuous oversight and improvement in the content and pedagogy in the core.

11. **Faculty oversight of the core.** Create a Business Core Council of College of Business faculty to provide oversight, integration, and continuous improvement of core courses.

**Discussion.** The Chair of this Council should be the Associate Dean for Undergraduate Programs. It will be the charge to this Council to establish a system of accountability for core course instructors to ensure that the appropriate content and pedagogy are implemented in all core classes. Even though core course instructors change, the content of core courses should not change dramatically. The Council shall create the desired outcomes for students in each core course and assess periodically whether those outcomes are being achieved. The Council will monitor trends in business education and make recommendations for continuous improvement in the business core.

**Previous recommendations.** The 1998 Task Force made a nearly identical recommendation.

12. **Business core course information for students and faculty.** Create a core web site containing information for all faculty and students on knowledge, skills, and attitudes to be developed in each core course.

**Discussion.** The proposed web site is to be used to guide instructors of core courses in what is to be the content, pedagogy, and outcomes of each course. Faculty teaching major courses will count on their students having knowledge and skills indicated on the web site and will design their major courses to take this knowledge and these skills into account. The Business Core Council will oversee the creation of this web site and will be responsible for its content.
Recommendations on Pedagogy in the Core and Core Course Relationship to Major Courses

13. **Business ethics, international business, and critical thinking skills.** Establish systematic coverage of business ethics, international business, and building critical thinking skills through the (functional) core courses.

**Discussion.** Core courses taught by the College of Business academic departments will address these knowledge and skill areas in specific and identifiable ways. Core course instructors will be held accountable by the Business Core Council to deliver the required elements and to make use of the tools and knowledge obtained in math, economics, computer skills, and statistics core courses.

14. **Core courses relationship to major courses.** Departments should reconsider their major courses (especially major core courses) in light of recommended changes to the core.

**Discussion.** All major courses in the College of Business should be reconsidered as to content and pedagogy in relation to business core courses. Major courses should take advantage of the skills and knowledge BUS students have acquired in their core courses. At least one required course in each major should implement elements to improve students’ business communications skills (see recommendation #7 above). Certain major courses should systematically make use of skills students have developed in mathematics, statistics, and computer software skills from their core courses.
RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PHASED IMPLEMENTATION

Spring 2004. College faculty will consider the recommendations and agree on a final set of recommendations to forward to the Senate for approval.

Fall 2004. Proposed changes will be processed through the Senate to be effective for students entering the college as freshmen in Fall 2005.

Implement experimental version of BUS 100, Introduction to Business for BUS Honors students.

Appoint Associate Dean for Undergraduate Programs

Fall 2005. New core requirements apply to students entering BUS as freshmen. Offer BUS 100 to all new BUS freshmen.

Begin offering computer workshops for all BUS students.

Implement Business Core Council as a functioning body. Create Business Core web site.

Fall 2006. Begin offering the new required Business Statistics course for all BUS students.

Offer Econ 2XX as a new required course for all BUS students.

Initiate accountability process for all instructors of business core courses.


Establish new Business Communications Center.


Implement business communications element and workshops in major classes.
APPENDICES

1 Existing requirements for BUS students: General education, business core, and major courses.

2 Current and proposed business core

3 Peer data on business core courses