

University of North Carolina Charlotte

Revised/New Undergraduate

Course and Curriculum Proposal from the University College Faculty Council



UNC CHARLOTTE

LONG FORM

**COURSE AND CURRICULUM PROPOSAL**

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To: Dr. Kim Harris, Chair  
From: Dr. Cliff Scott, Chair of the University College Faculty Council  
Date: 30 January 2016 (revised version of 8 October 2015 original)  
Re: Revisions to the UNC Charlotte General Education curriculum

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Changes to the General Education Requirements:  
First Year Writing and Liberal Studies

## II. CONTENT

### A. Summary:

The UCFC proposes to create two new courses and to rewrite the first year writing (FYW) and LBST requirements in the general education curriculum in order to create a more integrated curriculum that will develop students' ability to think critically and communicate effectively while still providing the breadth traditionally associated with the general education experience. The revised FYW/LBST requirements will consist of the following courses:

- One first year writing course – either UWRT 1103 (3 credits) or URWT 1104 (4 credits).
  - UWRT 1103 is an existing course that satisfies the general education requirement for 'Basic Writing Skills.'

- UWRT 1104, a new course that will satisfy the general education requirement for 'Basic Writing Skills,' has the same face-to-face curriculum as UWRT 1103 but adds a writing studio (delivered on-line) that gives less well prepared students more opportunity to practice.
- Placement into UWRT 1103 will be determined with reference to appropriate pre-enrollment indicators of writing ability.
- One LBST 110x course (Arts and Society theme)
- Two 2000-level LBST courses chosen from LBST 2101 (Western Culture and Historical Awareness theme), LBST 2102 (Global and Intercultural Connections theme), and LBST 221x (Ethical and Cultural Critique theme).
- One LBST 2301 course (Critical Thinking and Communication). LBST 2301 is a new course. Unlike other LBST courses, LBST 2301 is not defined by a thematic focus. Instead, LBST 2301 is defined by shared curriculum elements that are designed to develop critical thinking and communication skills and provide a 'capstone' experience for this part of the general education curriculum. To ensure the effective delivery of this skills-based curriculum, LBST 2301 will be taught in sections of 35 students or less and will normally be taught by full-time faculty.

NOTE: Other general education requirements – mathematics and logical reasoning, natural sciences, social sciences, and writing intensive and oral communication are NOT being changed.

## **B. JUSTIFICATION**

### **1. Need:**

This proposal reflects the recommendations made by a faculty taskforce that was charged to examine the general education curriculum. The original General Education Taskforce (Spring 2014) was formed to address questions emerging out of a 10<sup>th</sup> year review of the general education curriculum, but it also was charged to address a discussion on core competencies originating in a UNC System General Education Committee. As the scope of the curriculum changes being considered by the original Taskforce became clear, the group was enlarged and given a new charge in Fall 2014. The recommendation of the Taskforce (1 October 2015) came to the UCFC, since that faculty committee has responsibility for the general education curriculum.

The members of the General Education Taskforce, and members of the UCFC, believe that UNC Charlotte's general education requirements must be restructured so that the curriculum provides students with an explicit, structured pathway that will develop two core competencies: critical thinking and communication. The key word here is 'develop' since that implies that the curriculum is intentionally designed to foster improvement over time. It is for that reason that the changes being proposed explicitly link the curriculum in FYW courses with a sophomore-level critical thinking and communication course, LBST 2301. Both the Taskforce and UCFC hope that departments will build on the foundation provided in the new general education curriculum by integrating critical thinking and communication competencies into upper division coursework in the major.

Introducing a philosophy of ‘competencies’ is a significant, but necessary, change in UNC Charlotte’s general education program. The University’s current curriculum is based on a ‘distribution’ philosophy. The requirements ensure that students get exposure to different fields of thought and ways of knowing, but there is no sense that the general education curriculum builds towards any overarching skills. Exposure to different ways of knowing is an important element of a college education (and it is maintained in the proposed curriculum). However, given conversations at both the state and national level about the value of a college degree, the UCFC believes that our general education curriculum needs to incorporate, at least in part, a competencies approach and the developmental arc it implies.

Implementing a competencies approach in the general education requirements for FYW and LBST involves three changes. The first, and most important, concerns First Year Writing. Currently, the FYW requirement is the only part of the lower division general education curriculum that formally addresses written communication skills. In the past few years all three UWRT courses have been redesigned by University Writing Programs faculty to reflect best practices emerging out of research into how students learn how to write. However, that research also clearly shows that the ‘inoculation’ model implicit in our current curriculum is flawed. We cannot expect students to ‘learn to write’ in one course or pair of courses they take in their freshman year. Rather, we need to reposition the FYW course as first step in a curriculum that intentionally furthers the development of communications skills. The proposed curriculum delivers that experience in LBST 2301.

The second change concerns the addition of critical thinking as a general education outcome. UNC Charlotte’s current general education curriculum does not explicitly address critical thinking. This is not to say that critical thinking is not being taught; rather it suggests the need to articulate to students and other stakeholders that critical thinking skills are important. In its report, the General Education Taskforce frames critical thinking in fairly broad terms: the ability to pose questions, to explore and evaluate evidence relevant to those questions, and to analyze / synthesize findings in order to generate conclusions.

The third change in the curriculum is more mundane. The LBST requirements in the current curriculum are designed to ensure that students get some exposure to four broadly defined thematic areas. However, in order to ensure that the new curriculum is clear, the new LBST 2301 course will not have a thematic focus. Faculty teaching LBST 2301 will choose the content for their class in order to best complement the courses’ primary purpose which is to further develop students’ critical thinking and communication skills. Because it is not practicable to expand the total number of general education credits required, the UCFC accepts the Taskforce’s recommendation that in addition to LBST 2301, all students be required to take LBST 110X (Arts and Society) and that they then **choose** any two of the remaining 2000-level LBST courses – LBST 2101 (Western Culture and Historical Awareness), LBST 2102 (Global and Intercultural Connections, or LBST 221X (Ethical and Cultural Critique). The UCFC also concurs with the Task Force’s conclusions to require LBST 110X (Arts & Society) of all students, as not doing so would likely result in a large number of students acquiring bachelor’s degrees with no coursework in the arts.

## **2. Course requirements:**

### **a. Pre-requisites**

- **UWRT 1103:** UWRT 1103 is designed for students whose high school record suggests that they are better prepared. Placement into UWRT 1103 will be based on some combination of high school GPA and SAT scores. The University Writing Programs faculty have recommended that the threshold for placement into UWRT 1103 should be set so that between a third and a quarter of the freshman class will be eligible.
- **LBST 2301.** LBST 2301 will have a prerequisite of sophomore standing AND a C or better in UWRT 1103 or UWRT 1104. These prerequisites ensure that students take the LBST 2301 course after they have completed FYW. It is likely that students will take LBST 2301 after completing most of not all of their other LBST courses but implementing a specific rule to ensure that trajectory is impractical.

### **b. Transfer**

Given UNC Charlotte's large transfer population, the General Education Taskforce was specifically charged to consider how to handle transfer credit. The current practice is to be very generous with transfer equivalencies, particularly as regards the LBST requirements. Members of the Taskforce, however, feel that if the proposed curriculum will indeed have the benefits expected, then transfer students should not be exempted. The UCFC recommends, therefore, that with the exception of AA and AS degree holders and students who are in 2+2 completion programs (who are exempt from lower level general education requirements) all transfer students should be required to take LBST 2301. In addition, it recommends that students who only have credit for the first course in a two-course FYW sequence (the equivalent of UWRT 1101) be required to take UWRT 1103 at UNC Charlotte.

## **3. Course numbering:**

The two new courses proposed have numbers appropriate for the level of academic work required. UWRT 1104 is an entry-level class for new freshmen. LBST 2301 is a sophomore level course.

## **4. Improvement:**

The UCFC expects several benefits from the proposed curriculum.

- As noted, the intentional scaffolding of skill development between UWRT 1103/04 and LBST 2301 fulfills best practices indicated by research on how students learn to communicate effectively. Specifically, students will take a first year writing course that introduces key skills and later take a course that requires them to further develop communication skills in the context of learning to think critically about a specific course topic.
- The addition of a formally defined critical thinking outcome in the general education curriculum will focus both students' and faculty's attention on this core competency.
- The creation of LBST 2301, which will be taught by disciplinary faculty from across the university, will signal to students that communication is a

fundamental and universal aspect of the learning process and not something one only does in 'special' courses. In addition, because a relatively large number of faculty from across the University will teach LBST 2301, there will be more opportunities for collaboration and integration of curricula to support the students' acquisition of communication skills.

- The requirement that full time faculty teach the LBST 2301 course and the limit on class size will increase the participation of full time faculty in the general education curriculum.

The UCFC is aware that the proposed curriculum appears to decrease the writing requirements in general education, but this is not the case. In the first place, about 50% of new freshmen are currently placed into UWRT 1103. Those students take only one FYW course, and they do not get their writing skills reinforced in any formal or structured way until they take writing intensive courses in the upper division. UWRT 1103 is one of the two FYW courses in the proposed curriculum, but students who take UWRT 1103 will also take LBST 2301. The students who are not placed into UWRT 1103 currently take two FYW courses (1101 and 1102). In the new curriculum these students will still be taking two courses that address writing: UWRT 1103 or 1104 and LBST 2301. Finally, it is worth noting that the UCFC is recommending that placement rules be established so that approximately 75% of new students are placed into UWRT 1104. UWRT 1104 combines the face-to-face curriculum of UWRT 1103 with an online writing studio (hence the additional credit) to ensure that less well prepared students have the opportunity to practice their writing skills. The recommendation that 75% of students be placed into UWRT 1104 marks a change from the current placement process. On average about 50% of new freshmen are being placed into UWRT 1103 (the one semester course), so the proposed requirement places more students into the more intensive writing sequence.

## **5. Previous Offerings**

UWRT 1104 was offered in Fall 2015 and is being offered in Spring 2016 in several pilot sections. The faculty in University Writing Programs has developed the online modules for the writing studio and are testing the effectiveness of the new format. Results from the Fall 2015 pilot are positive, and in particular faculty report that the online writing studio is effective and providing students with additional opportunities to engage in writing in different genres and improve their skills.

Five faculty members (2 from RELS, 1 from ANTH, GES, and PHIL) piloted the LBST CTC curriculum in sections taught in Fall 2015. In developing these courses, the faculty worked with colleagues from University Writing Programs as well as two colleagues from the General Education Taskforce. In general the experience was positive and all of the faculty indicated that they would be willing to try teaching the course again. The faculty were very positive about the opportunity to collaborate with colleagues from First Year Writing and each other. They also reported good, if at times challenging, experiences working with students to develop critical thinking and communication skills. Faculty did report that the courses were a lot of work, but they also acknowledged that they might have asked for too much and that a scaled-back set of assignments could have accomplished the same outcomes. The faculty did report a degree of tension between a need to cover 'content' and the skills-based focus of the CTC curriculum. Some had positive

experiences using e-portfolios, others less so. Issues that need attention if the course is offered again include

- A clearer definition of, and ways of teaching, critical thinking
- Discussion on types of assignments and ways of giving feedback that develop skills without overburdening faculty
- Discussion of how to combine skills development and content coverage.

## C. IMPACT

### 1. On Students

The proposed curriculum will impact a large proportion of undergraduate students attending UNC Charlotte. The only exception will be transfer students holding the AA/AS degree or students in 2+2 completion programs.

In general terms, the new curriculum requirements will apply only to new students enrolling after the implementation date – Fall 2017; current students will be grandfathered under the old rules. However, the specifics of the grandfathering rules will depend on what courses a student has completed at the time the new curriculum goes into effect. The details are as follows:

- a) Continuing Students (students who are in active enrollment status\* when the new curriculum goes into effect)
  - If FYW is completed – Then current requirements apply until graduation. These students must complete the four current LBST requirements.
  - IF credit for UWRT 1101 – Then students will have one academic year (through 2<sup>nd</sup> Summer 2018) after the new curriculum goes into effect to complete UWRT 1102. If they do so, they will then need to complete all four ‘regular’ LBST courses before graduating. Students who do not complete their FYW requirement in this period will be moved to the new requirements. This rule is necessary because the expectation is that UWRT 1101 and 1102 will be discontinued.
    - \* “Active Enrollment Status” is defined by the Office of the Registrar to include students who are enrolled for the current semester and students with an enrollment gap of less than one full academic year. Students who have an enrollment gap of more than one year must apply to be readmitted – see below.
- b) New freshmen admitted in the term that the new curriculum becomes effective – Fall 2017 -- will be under the new curriculum. Some new freshmen bring transfer credit for FYW courses and the transfer equivalency rules described above will apply.
- c) New transfers admitted in the term that the new curriculum becomes effective
  - If FYW is completed – Then the current requirements apply until graduation. These students must complete the four current LBST requirements.
  - IF credit for UWRT 1101 – Then students will have one academic year (through 2<sup>nd</sup> Summer 2018) after the new curriculum goes into effect to complete UWRT

1102. If they do so, they will then need to complete all four ‘regular’ LBST courses before graduating. Students who do not complete their FYW requirement in this period will be moved to the new requirements. This rule is necessary because the expectation is that UWRT 1101 and 1102 will be discontinued.

- d) New transfer students admitted one year after the new curriculum requirements (Fall 2018) will be under the new curriculum.

The extended grandfathering window allowed to transfer students is necessary to accommodate students who may have planned to take particular courses before transferring to UNC Charlotte based on the requirements currently in place. The proposal above does not extend that accommodation to new freshmen with transfer credit from AP exams or Early College High School; however, such accommodation may turn out to be appropriate. The proposal to apply the curriculum to new transfer students after one year depends when the University is able to communicate the details of the new curriculum to our community college partners. If the decision to implement is delayed an additional one-year extension may be appropriate.

## 2. On Existing Curricula

- a) New Courses: the new courses proposed will be offered on a comprehensive schedule: fall and spring semesters, summer, and evenings. Estimates on the numbers of sections of the new courses needed were generated by modeling new freshmen and new transfer enrollments in Fall 2015 vis a vis the factors that determine students’ path through the curriculum. They are as follows:
- UWRT 1103: 65 sections per academic year. This estimate is based on a target of 25% placement for new freshmen students and courses needed by new transfer students how have prior credit for a course.
  - UWRT 1104: 130 sections per academic year. This estimate is based on a target of 75% placement for new freshmen and accounts for fall to spring attrition in the freshman class.
  - LBST 2301: 168 sections per academic year. This estimate is based on expected retention of new freshmen to the sophomore year and the expected demand from new transfer students who do not transfer with the Associates’ degree.

These estimates are based on current enrollments. As enrollments grow, demand will increase proportionally. Every additional 100 students in the freshman class will require approximately 3.5 additional sections of UWRT 1104, 1.1 sections of UWRT 1103, and 2.5 sections of LBST 2301. Every additional 100 additional students in the transfer class requires approximately .5 section of UWRT 1104, 2 sections of UWRT 1103, and 2 sections of LBST 2301.

- b) Existing Courses: This proposal impacts existing UWRT and LBST courses. A summary of the changes is shown in the table below.

	FYW		LBST			
CURRENT	UWRT 1101 (3 cr)	UWRT 1102 (3 cr)	LBST 110x	LBST 2101	LBST 2102	LBST 221X
	or		↓	↓	↓	
	UWRT 1103 (3 cr)					
PROPOSED	UWRT 1103 (3 cr)		LBST 110x	Any 2 of LBST 2101 LBST 2102 LBST 221X		LBST 2301
	Or					
	UWRT 1104 (4 cr)					

- Changes to UWRT: UWRT 1101 and 1102 will be phased out once the new curriculum is fully implemented. UWRT 1103 already exists and will remain for all intents and purposes the same course.
  - Changes to LBST:
    - LBST 110X: Because of the requirement that all students take LBST 110X, there will not be any impact on those courses.
    - 2000 level LBST: Once the curriculum is fully implemented LBST 2301 will effectively replace one of the current 2000-level LBST courses that students must take. As a result, the total demand for seats in 2000-level ‘regular’ LBST courses will decline. However, the decline in the number of seats needed will be offset to some extent by the fact that some faculty currently teaching LBST courses in a large enrollment format (> 50) will convert their classes to LBST 2301 which has enrollment restricted to 35. It will take 2-3 years for the offerings of ‘regular’ 2000-level LBST courses to stabilize to meet demand. However, because the University has been filling LBST courses to well over 95% of capacity in recent years additional LBST capacity during the transition period is not likely to be wasted. Finally it should be noted that while fewer sections and fewer seats of the 2000-level ‘regular’ LBST courses will be taught, all of those courses will continue to be offered on a regular basis in all semesters.
- c) Anticipated Enrollment:
- UWRT 1103 and 1104 will remain at the current enrollment of 22.
  - LBST 2301 course has been developed with a maximum enrollment of 35 students in mind. This class size allows faculty to provide the individual attention to students needed to achieve the course’s learning outcome.
- d) Impact on Other Courses: Except for the 2000-level LBST courses discussed above there is no anticipated impact on enrollment in other courses.
- e) Catalog Copy: The new requirements will require a careful review of catalog copy for all curricula. Many academic programs specify academic plans of study that make reference to general education requirements; those will need to be changed to reflect these new requirements.



### III. RESOURCES REQUIRED

#### A. PERSONNEL

##### 1. LBST 2301 Sections:

The intention of this proposal is that LBST 2301 will normally be taught by full-time faculty. Projections indicate that 168 sections of LBST 2301 will need to be taught each academic year (assuming a freshman class of 3650 and a transfer class of 4000.) Some of the LBST 2301 sections will be taught by current faculty who choose to adapt their existing LBST offerings to the CTC format. The remainder of the LBST 2301 sections will need to be taught by new faculty, and the mix of new faculty can vary including new tenure track faculty, new lecturers, and, post doctoral teaching fellows. Discussion regarding each of these options follows:

- Existing Faculty: Although precise numbers vary, approximately 138 sections of LBST are taught annually by full time faculty. (This is between 40 and 50% of the total number of LBST sections offered annually.) Of these sections, just over half cannot be converted to the LBST 2301 CTC format.\* In any given year, therefore, there are about 70 sections of LBST taught by full time faculty that can be converted to the CTC format. About half of these are currently taught in sections enrolling 40 or fewer students, the other half enroll larger numbers. At this point in the planning process it is impossible to determine what proportion of current LBST faculty will choose to convert their courses to the CTC format. Two models have been developed, one assuming that 25% of faculty convert their classes, the other assuming that 50% do so.  
\*There are a variety of reasons why existing LBST courses cannot be converted to the CTC format. These include: LBST 110X courses which are needed because that course is required; Honors sections that primarily serve new freshmen; Prospect courses (fall semester) that also serve new freshmen, and on-line courses that are not appropriate for the CTC curriculum.
- New Faculty – Tenure Track: If CTC sections are staffed by new tenure track faculty it is assumed that those faculty will have research teaching load as per normal practice in the department in which they are hired. NOTE: if new tenure track lines are allocated to staff the LBST 2301 courses, we DO NOT expect that that the new hire will exclusively teach LBST 2301. Rather, departments receiving the new lines will agree to provide the appropriate number of LBST 2301 sections per year taught by a rotation of their existing faculty.
- New Faculty – Lecturers: If CTC sections are staffed by new lecturers, it is assumed that those faculty will have a 4/4 teaching load. NOTE: if new lecturer lines are allocated to staff the LBST 2301 courses, we DO NOT expect that that the new hire will exclusively teach LBST 2301. Rather, departments receiving the new lines will agree to provide 4 LBST 2301 sections per semester taught by a rotation of their existing faculty.
- New Faculty – Post Doctoral Teaching Fellows: The UCFC has proposed that some of the new resources for LBST 2301 be post doctoral teaching fellows. Post doctoral

fellows would be hired on a 2 year contract (one extension of one year possible). They would teach 3 sections of LBST 2301 per semester, and in addition to their salary they would be provided with summer funds to support research/faculty development. Post doctoral fellows would be recruited centrally but would be ultimately hired by a department appropriate for their disciplinary expertise. Departments would agree to provide mentoring to these fellows and integrate them into the faculty community.

- Graduate Assistantships – It has been proposed that a fourth option for staffing LBST 2301 sections is to provide graduate assistants to departments in which faculty are teaching LBST 2301 in order to allow one faculty member to teach more students. Such courses might be scheduled with alternating lecture and discussion/work group meeting times during the week. Faculty teaching LBST 2301 sections using graduate students would need to work closely with their GTAs to ensure that the quality of instruction is maintained.

The actual distribution of teaching effort between these five options remains to be determined. The decision on which option is pursued will depend on many factors, including the resources required and the curricular integrity of the program. Different options can be modeled, and a sampling of the total new resource requirements is as follows:

- \$ 2.0 Million: assumes a 25% conversion rate of existing LBST sections to LBST 2301 with additional sections taught equally by new tenure track faculty and lectures.
- \$ 1.6-1.5 Million: assumes either
  - 25% conversion rate of existing LBST sections to LBST 2301 with additional sections taught by new tenure track lines (20%), new lecturers (50%) and post doctoral fellows (30%)
  - 50% conversion rate of existing LBST sections to LBST 2301 with additional sections taught by new tenure track faculty (33%) and new lecturers (67%)
- \$ 1 Million: a 50% conversion rate of existing LBST sections to LBST 2301 with remaining sections taught exclusively by lecturers.

## **2. Program Administration and Faculty Oversight:**

The effectiveness of this curriculum hinges to a large degree on the collective faculty ownership of the curriculum. That ownership is already in place for the UWRT courses since those are taught by faculty in University Writing Programs that is administratively positioned to engage faculty in curriculum discussions. The new LBST 2301 course presents a completely different challenge in this regard. Given the need to offer 168 sections per year it is likely that in a given year this course will be taught by 80 or more unique faculty from 10 to 20 departments. To maintain curricular coherence in LBST 2301 it will therefore be necessary to have a program coordinator. This position would be suitable for an experienced lecturer or perhaps a tenured faculty member who wishes to emphasize his or her teaching portfolio. The duties are likely to require 50-75% of the coordinator's effort and in addition a 1.5 month summer stipend will be needed to ensure continuity of effort beyond the 9 month faculty appointment. The exact amount needed

will depend on the individual circumstances of the appointee but \$50,000 is a reasonable estimate. [The person responsible for coordinating this curriculum will report to the Dean of University College.](#)

In addition, it will be helpful to provide summer stipends to 6 associate coordinators, both LBST faculty and FYW faculty. These should also be for 1.5 months. The total needed is estimated at \$45,000.

In addition to the program coordinator and associate coordinators, the UCFC, an elected body with representatives from all colleges, will provide advice and consent regarding the [coherence and quality of the curriculum including the staffing models and the criteria and processes](#) through which proposed syllabi are evaluated as meeting the LBST 2301 objectives for critical thinking and communication.

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#### **B. PHYSICAL FACILITY**

YES. The new LBST 2301 courses will require significant increase in demand for medium to small sized classrooms (rooms between ~60 and 35 seats) as compared to the 'regular' LBST courses it will replace. However, there will be a significant decrease in the rooms used for sections of FYW courses that free up rooms in this size range for use. Consultation with staff in the Registrar's Office responsible for room scheduling indicates that while the proposed curriculum will put additional pressure on rooms in the 35-60 seat range the sections needed can be accommodated in current classrooms.

#### **C. Equipment and Supplies**

No additional resources required

#### **D. Computer**

No additional resources required

#### **E. Audio-Visual**

No additional resources required

#### **F. Other Resources**

##### **1. Faculty Development:**

To maintain the integrity of the new curriculum a comprehensive faculty development program needs to be put into place. The personnel needs for this faculty development operation are included above. In addition to personnel, the faculty development effort will need access to funds for course development stipends, workshops etc. It will also need some discretionary funding to provide refreshments for workshop participants. An annual budget of \$30,000 in state dollars and \$2500 in discretionary should provide sufficient support.

##### **2. Preceptors:**

Full-time faculty teaching LBST 2301 will have the option of recruiting an undergraduate preceptor to assist with various elements of the course. Assuming that half of eligible instructors take advantage of this offer an annual budget of \$70,000 will be required.

**G. Source of Funding**

The Provost has been kept apprised of the resource needs for the new curriculum throughout its development and believes that while the curriculum will require investment, the amounts needed are realistic and feasible.

**IV. CONSULTATION**

This document was originally submitted for a broad and comprehensive process of consultation with campus stakeholders in early October 2015. In October and November 2015 representatives from UCFC, University College, and University Writing programs met with a number of groups including departments and colleges, elected committees at the college and university level, and administrative leadership bodies at the college and university level. This consultation process generated a vigorous discussion on both philosophical and practical grounds; however no consensus emerged from this consultation process that would have led the UCFC to make any substantive changes to the proposal. Therefore, this revised document includes some clarifications stemming from the Fall 2015 consultation process but in all important respects the proposal is the same.