I. OVERVIEW

The mission and goals of Beloit College describe a range of commitments that we take to be central to a liberal education. Through these commitments, we affirm both the core values of our learning community, as well as the range of skills and habits of the mind inculcated in Beloit students through the College curriculum. These include a commitment to developing an understanding of the various social, cultural, aesthetic, and scientific aspects of the human experience, and the core writing, quantitative, and intercultural skills at the heart of responsible global citizenship.

The aim of the new curriculum is to better align our all-College curriculum with these commitments. The two main pieces---domains and skills---offer us a curriculum aimed more directly at fulfilling these commitments, while simultaneously allowing our students to more intentionally engage their general education. In particular, our commitment to developing in our students “an awareness of the ways in which disciplines interact and overlap” is brought to the forefront by the replacement of divisions with domains. In so doing, we recognize and highlight the conceptual connections that unite courses from various areas of the College, while at the same time celebrating the ways in which different courses within a single discipline may be doing very different kinds of things.

- The new skill requirements are built around three skills: W (writing), Q (quantitative reasoning), and C (intercultural competency).
- The five new domains are: Systems, Arts, Behavior, Universe, and Texts.
  - Individual courses, rather than whole departments, may be located in any one domain.
- Courses may simultaneously satisfy domain and skill requirements for students, though no single course may satisfy either multiple domain or multiple skill requirements. However, some courses may be listed as possibly satisfying more than one skill requirement.

II. DOMAINS

1. CONCEPTUAL AND FOUNDATIONAL SYSTEMS (Systems)
   This domain concerns the foundational concepts and systems that are central to all investigation. Courses in this domain, among other things, provide the foundations for communication and discourse, for scientific inquiry, and for reasoning itself. The focus of Systems courses is on these foundational concepts themselves, as well as the many rules and principles that govern their systemic relationship and application.
   Within this domain, students develop an applied, working knowledge of the various relational principles that govern a foundational system.

   Courses typical of this domain include calculus and similar mathematics courses, music theory, logic, and language instruction courses in both modern (French, German, Spanish, Russian, etc.) and classical (Ancient Greek, Latin, and Egyptian Hieroglyphs) languages.

2. ARTISTIC AND CREATIVE PRACTICES (Arts)
   This domain concerns the articulation of the intellectual processes and techniques used to create an imaginative product, typically with an audience in mind. Courses in this domain engage students’ mastery of techniques and sharpen their aptitude for creative abstraction and its use in the imaginative process. Products that might emerge from courses in this domain include works of art, computer programs, entrepreneurial projects and other creations that engage students’ mastery of techniques, as well as their abilities to work with and through creative abstraction. The goals of courses in this domain include instructing students on approaches and techniques used for creating conceptual material for an audience, introducing standards of creative practice, training students on observation and critique of their own and others’ work, and cultivating technical proficiency necessary for the creative discipline.

   Courses typical of this domain include those in studio art, computer visualization and programming, dance technique, entrepreneurship, creative writing, broadcasting, music technique, creative journalism, and performance/production techniques for the theatre.
3. SOCIAL ANALYSIS OF HUMAN BEHAVIOR (Behavior)
This domain concerns social analysis as a way of understanding human behavior. Students explore approaches and models that enhance our understanding of human behavior within a variety of cultural and social contexts, both contemporary and historical. This domain encompasses a range of methodological approaches, both qualitative and quantitative. Typically, courses offer theoretical/analytical approaches to the study of human behavior that relate to empirical data. These courses may also address the implications of social science research for public policy formation.

Courses in this domain might come from fields such as anthropology, economics, history, religious studies, and political science.

4. SCIENTIFIC INQUIRY INTO THE PHYSICAL AND BIOLOGICAL UNIVERSE (Universe)
This domain concerns scientific inquiry as an approach to comprehending the physical and biological universe. In these courses, students formulate and test hypotheses about the physical and biological universe by gathering, analyzing, and interpreting empirical data in laboratory and/or field settings. Students develop abilities to evaluate scientific evidence, and may also develop an understanding of the applications of science for local, national, and global issues.

Courses in this domain might come from the physical and biological sciences, as well as biologically oriented courses in anthropology, psychology, and other areas.

5. TEXTUAL CULTURES AND ANALYSIS (Texts)
This domain concerns the study and critical analysis of texts. In this domain, texts are considered finite, organized discourses that are intended to communicate. Courses in this domain examine the connections and coherence between the parts of the discourse and the cultural, social, philosophical, and/or historical contexts from which they stem. Students learn how to engage texts, both as reader and respondent, and they develop the interpretative and analytic skills necessary for responsible engagement with texts.

Courses typical of this domain are those in literature (in English and other languages), religious studies, history, philosophy, and courses in the social sciences and other areas with a discursive emphasis.

PROCEDURES FOR DESIGNATING A COURSE WITHIN A DOMAIN
For Fall 2011 course offerings, the department chair, in consultation with his/her colleagues, will be responsible for assigning courses to domains, when the call for schedule is sent out by the Registrar’s Office. By the end of the spring term, in time for preparation of the new catalog and implementation of the new curriculum, each department will “domain” any other current courses that will not be offered this fall. These designations shall remain fixed unless COA approves their change. COA is empowered to periodically review and reconsider the domain designation of courses. Faculty seeking the approval of new courses shall indicate to COA the domain in which they wish the course to be offered. In evaluating the proposal, COA shall take into consideration the criteria approved by Senate. Designations of new courses approved by COA shall remain fixed unless the committee acts to change them.

Q & A REGARDING DOMAINS
Q: Are these domains a radical break from our old distribution requirements?
A: No. To the extent that our previous requirements, built on a traditional way of carving up the academic universe, helped to highlight and reinforce coherent and meaningful linkages across departments and courses, this model aims
to preserve and strengthen those linkages by making them more transparent and better defined. This model also preserves the requirement that distribution requirements be completed early in the student’s undergraduate career, by the end of the fourth semester.

Q: What are the most important advantages of moving away from our old distribution requirements towards these new ones, based on domains?

A: While our old requirements preserved and strengthened meaningful linkages in some cases, in other cases the linkages forced by the old requirements ranged from somewhat to highly incoherent. One important source of this problem is the inability of our old requirements to recognize the sharp and fundamental distinctions that frequently obtain between courses within a “division,” and sometimes obtain between courses within a department. This new model allows us to more intelligently group our courses according to what actually happens in them for our students, rather than simply according to where their department had historically been aligned.

Q: Why allow students to satisfy a domain requirement with two courses, rather than simply specifying the requirement as one unit?

A: Insofar as one key goal of distribution requirements is to ensure students’ exposure, early in their undergraduate education, to a wide variety of academic areas and approaches, the case of .25-unit courses in particular raised a problem. That is, in cases where instructors identify .25-unit courses as falling within some domain, how many of those courses should be needed to consider the domain requirement satisfied? While these cases may be rare in most departments and programs, it was raised by a variety of parties with respect to the arts (and especially music) as particularly important. This requirement is meant to respect the fact that two or more semesters of engaging with the arts, while perhaps failing to amount to a full unit in total, seems to sufficiently satisfy the purpose of these requirements. This applies to other similarly structured courses and programs. Note that not all partial-unit courses will be identified within a domain.

Q: May courses belong to more than one domain?

A: No. It is certainly true that we may commonly find elements of more than one domain in our courses—e.g., courses outside of “Texts” will surely work with primary texts. But locating a course within a particular domain involves identifying what that course primarily (or, at least, significantly) is about, rather than what it merely is about. There is no perfect way of carving up the academic universe (though there are, presumably, better or worse ways); any arrangement will find certain courses, and perhaps certain departments, closer to the boundaries of categories than others. Whereas before, by the old 2-2-2-1 requirements, courses were forced into categories by department and could not intelligently be located elsewhere, the new curriculum opens up that possibility. History is an instructive example, as a department comprised of many courses that sit near the boundaries of multiple domains: whereas all history courses, by the 2-2-2-1 requirements, were forced to satisfy only the Division III requirement, this new system provides a mechanism for more intelligently locating courses. A course on contemporary immigration may, for example, be listed as satisfying the “Behavior” requirement, while a course focusing on ancient or medieval texts may be listed as satisfying the “Texts” requirement. Certainly, this is all at the discretion of the instructor and department, and history faculty may conceivably choose to locate all of their courses in the “Texts” domain, thus mapping most closely onto their previous location entirely in Division III. In this light, these new domain requirements only enhance our ability as faculty to intelligently locate our courses in ways that most closely describe the student experience within the course, and so should be seen only as autonomy-enhancing.

Q: Must every course belong to a domain?

A: No. Under normal circumstances, most courses (particularly those at the 100-level, as well as others that might satisfy domain requirements) will belong to some domain. However, there is no specification of domains that neatly and perfectly finds a home for every possible course. Some courses will inevitably straddle domains, or fit in the spaces between domains, and this curricular diversity should be recognized and embraced. Also, special
circumstances may dictate that a course lack any domain home—such as, for example, by the direction of COA, given the particular content of the course.

Q: Under this model, what happens to IDST courses?
A: IDST courses will continue to be offered as much or as little as faculty choose to offer them; no new limitations in IDST offerings have been introduced. IDST courses may belong to some domain, though the possibility of domain-less courses gives both faculty and COA wide latitude in conceiving IDST courses. This new model does not require that students take an IDST course, but it allows IDST courses to be located within domains and so to count toward domain requirements.

Q: May a single course simultaneously satisfy multiple domain requirements?
A: No. Because courses may not be listed under multiple domains.

Q: May courses that satisfy domain requirements also simultaneously satisfy the W, Q, and C skill requirements?
A: Yes; there are no limitations on how many of the five required skills courses (3 W, 1 Q, 1 C) may simultaneously satisfy the domain requirements.

Q: How do AP and transfer units work with domains?
A: This proposal is not meant to change past practices of allowing transfer and AP units to satisfy distribution requirements. Because domains shift the emphasis in distribution requirements from whole departments to courses, students and advisors will need to work in tandem with appropriate faculty members and the registrar’s office in order to ensure that transferred units are applied appropriately. The registrar’s office will need to put in place a plan for how to handle transfer units under this model, much as the office had a system for handling transfer units under the previous model.

Q: Why isn’t my department listed in the domain descriptions above?
A: Wherever departments are listed in the domain descriptions, they are offered only for illustrative purposes, as possible examples of departments from which courses satisfying that domain requirement may be drawn. The lists are certainly not exhaustive, nor are they in any sense authoritative; they are merely the curriculum subcommittee’s attempt at finding some possible examples. Faculty members have autonomy over their classes to decide where they fit.
III. SKILLS

1. WRITING INTENSIVE (W)

Core objectives:

An important objective of a W course is to improve students’ writing skills (LW). Moreover, these courses can also deploy writing as a tool to serve other course objectives, such as critical thinking and learning, collaboration, etc. (WL).

The objectives of W courses go beyond students simply completing writing and demonstrating writing skills—course objectives, methods, and outcomes must also include developing those skills.

Teaching and learning processes:

All W courses include a substantial writing practice as follows:

- Students complete multiple assignment/activities with a writing component.
- Classroom time, assignment design, and activities address related writing strategies and outcomes.
- Students draft and revise writing in response to instructor feedback.

Typical outcomes (to be articulated more specifically and contextually by instructor/department):

Students develop and demonstrate ability to

- write with a sense of audience, purpose, and focus.
- develop an organizational strategy consistent with that purpose.
- use logic and evidence effectively to support claims.
- write clearly and correctly.

2. QUANTITATIVE REASONING (Q)

Core objectives:

An important objective of a Q course is to improve students’ skills related to thinking with numbers (what we might call LQ—learning to quantify). Moreover, these courses can also deploy quantitative components to serve other course objectives, such as thinking critically, communicating precisely, and supporting arguments with quantitative evidence.

The objectives of Q courses go beyond students simply engaging in quantitative operations and demonstrating quantitative reasoning skills—course objectives, methods, and outcomes must also include developing those skills.

Teaching and learning processes:

All Q courses include a quantitative reasoning component as follows:

- Students complete multiple assignments/activities with a quantitative reasoning component.
- Classroom time, assignment design, and activities address related quantitative reasoning strategies and outcomes.
- Students revisit and improve their quantitative reasoning skills in response to instructor feedback.

Typical outcomes (to be articulated more specifically and contextually by instructor/department):

Students develop and demonstrate ability to

- perform basic mathematical operations.
- analyze and/or produce tables, charts, and graphs modeling quantitative data.
3. INTERCULTURAL LITERACY (C)

Core objectives:

Intercultural literacy is a dynamic and ongoing process where students begin to learn how to navigate a variety of social/cultural communities from a range of intellectual perspectives. C courses are designed to improve students’ abilities to critically reflect on how their social and political perspectives matter as they actively engage across cultural, social, political boundaries in the US and abroad.

The objectives of C courses go beyond students simply identifying diverse aspects of our global society—course objectives, methods and outcomes must also include developing literacies to actively engage with communities both local and beyond.

Teaching and learning processes:

All C courses include a substantial intercultural literacy component practice as follows:

- Students complete multiple assignments and activities and/or participate in labs with an intercultural literacy component.
- Students increase awareness of their political, social, and cultural location and reflect on how their cultural lenses affect how they understand and operate in the world.
- Students have opportunities to reflect on intercultural literacies as a lifelong process.

Typical outcomes (to be articulated more specifically and contextually by instructor/department):

Students increase their awareness, knowledge, and ability relative to core objectives by

- analyzing how knowledge reflects the cultural, historical, political, economic, social, contexts in which it is produced.
- developing the tools to effectively communicate across a variety of political and cultural boundaries, both in the U.S. and abroad.
- employing analytical approaches in thinking about privilege and power in relation to race, gender, sexuality, ethnicity, geography, and class, historically and contemporarily.

PROCEDURES FOR DESIGNATING A COURSE WITH A SKILL

Under the advisement of appropriate faculty members, departments and programs will indicate which existing courses fall under the W, Q, or C rubric, based on the criteria approved by Senate. These designations shall remain fixed unless COA approves their change. COA is empowered to periodically review and reconsider the skill designation of courses. Faculty seeking the approval of new courses shall indicate to COA if they wish to have a course designated W, Q, or C. In evaluating the proposal, COA shall take into consideration the criteria approved by Senate. Designations of new courses approved by COA shall remain fixed unless the committee acts to change them.
Q & A REGARDING SKILLS

Q: Are these the only skills that we think a Beloit College student must develop?

A: No. But following discussions last year regarding the wide range of skills that are crucial to being a well-functioning global citizen, including the difficulties of highlighting and specifying where and how those skills might be developed in a curriculum, we arrived at these skills as particularly fundamental, and as realistic to address in a systematic way through the curriculum. These three skills certainly reflect some of our most foundational commitments to our students.

Q: What happened to the developmental model of skills (e.g., W1, W2, W3 and Q1, Q2, Q3)? Wasn’t that supposed to be a part of this?

A: With respect to writing, this new skills requirement is in the context of a curriculum that already includes an FYI for all incoming students, as well as a newly-adopted required capstone experience for seniors. Insofar as the FYI program already meets the criteria for a W class specified here, and many capstones will do so as well, there is a sense in which the development of writing is already built into the curriculum, without the need to specify it as an additional requirement. With respect to quantitative reasoning and intercultural literacy, the possibility may exist to develop a developmental trajectory for either or both in the curriculum at a later date.

Q: May a single course simultaneously satisfy multiple skill requirements?

A: No. Some courses may be designated as satisfying multiple skills—so, for example, a single course might be listed as both a C and Q course. In that case, students may choose to count the course as satisfying either the C or Q requirement, but not both. This is meant to ensure that all students have at least five full units of courses explicitly devoted to skill development.

Q: May courses that satisfy W, Q, and C skill requirements also simultaneously satisfy domain requirements?

A: Yes; there are no limitations on how many of the five required skills courses (3 W, 1 Q, 1 C) may simultaneously satisfy the domain requirements.