

# **Creating a Common Curriculum at CU Boulder**

## **Progress Report and Request for Input**

### **Common Curriculum Planning Committee**

**April 2022**

## Common Curriculum Planning Committee Membership

### Co-chairs

Katherine Eggert, Senior Vice Provost for Academic Planning & Assessment; Professor of English

Daryl Maeda, Dean and Vice Provost for Undergraduate Education; Professor of Ethnic Studies

### Staff committee members

Shelly Bacon, Undergraduate Education

Patrick Tally, College of Arts and Sciences

Joe Thomas, Student Affairs

### Student committee members

Evangelyne Eliason, third-year undergraduate student majoring in psychology

Jemil Abdu Kassahun, first-year Colorado Law student

### Committee support staff

Andre Grothe, Office of Academic Planning & Assessment

Erika Swain, Office of Data Analytics

Robin Swift, Office of Information Technology

### Faculty committee members

Russell Cropanzano, Leeds School of Business

Barbara Demmig-Adams, Ecology and Evolutionary Biology

Vicki Grove, Germanic and Slavic Languages and Literatures and vice chair of the Boulder Faculty Assembly

Roudy Hildreth, School of Education

Caroline Sinkinson, Libraries

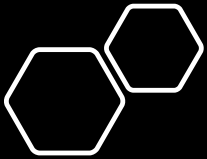
Nicolò Spera, Music

Colin West, Physics

Cindy White, Communication

Wendy Young, Chemical and Biological Engineering

Thomas Zeiler, International Affairs



# Common Curriculum: What brings us here?



## Academic Futures Recommendation October 2018

*“Formulate and then move to implement a plan for **a campus-wide common learning experience and/or curriculum**”*

## Higher Learning Commission Accreditation Review January 2020

*“**CU Boulder does not have a** clearly identified, institutional philosophy or framework developed to ground and guide **general education for all undergraduate students [as is required for accreditation].**”*

## Chancellor DiStefano’s Directive to the University May 2020

*“A common general education experience for all undergraduate students that is cohesive across all our colleges and schools that offer undergraduate degrees. . . . fully aligns with our Academic Futures strategic initiative that recommends **a campus-wide common learning experience and a common set of intended learning outcomes.**”*

# A Common Curriculum is Not a Core Curriculum

## **Common Curriculum**

A set of integrative values, learning outcomes, and common touchpoints that are reached in the diverse landscape of courses throughout the undergraduate career.

## **Core curriculum**

A prescribed curriculum organized as a fixed set of required courses/competencies, a set of “distribution requirements,” or a combination of the two.

# Prepping for a Common Curriculum Discussion White Papers & Spring 2021 Listening Tour

White papers invited: 14 received

Listening tour:

- \* >80 sessions with academic departments, student support offices, & student groups + open forums
- \* >1250 students, faculty & staff participated
- \* What did we ask?
  - What university values should the common curriculum represent and support?
  - What should a graduate of CU Boulder know and be able to do?



# The Common Curriculum Planning Committee Formed September 2021

## Scope of the Committee's Work:

Using the input from the Listening Tour and white papers as a springboard, **create a framework for a curriculum whose learning objectives represent common themes and a set of relationships that instantiate the values we hold at CU Boulder.**



# The Common Curriculum Planning Committee

## Framing questions

What learning objectives did the faculty voice in the listening tour and in white papers? Of those, which express the quality and rigor of a CU Boulder education across all disciplines?

What do our students expect to learn & know?

What do outside stakeholders (employers, alumni, policymakers/regulators, the public) expect our students to learn & know?

What is CU Boulder's mission and how do our educational values reflect that?

What can we learn from peer (and other) institutions' models? What makes CU Boulder distinctive?

## Goals

1. Identify the overall objective of the Common Curriculum: i.e., **the purpose and distinctive nature of a CU Boulder education**
2. Identify **further learning objectives** that define:
  - \* **Habits of mind** that support learning, inquiry, and engagement
  - \* **Essential skills**
3. Draft **learning outcomes for each learning objective**

# What is the purpose and distinctive nature of a CU Boulder education?

## **SUSTAINABLE FUTURES: SELF, SOCIETY, WORLD**

**At CU Boulder, students will gain an understanding of the interdependence of individual, societal and environmental wellbeing and of the necessity for stewardship and solutions to advance balanced and equitable futures for all. Throughout their CU Boulder education, students will cultivate skills and habits of mind that enable them to thrive as individuals and contribute to a thriving world.**

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Preparing to engage in self-understanding, sustain personal well-being, and make ethical choices

## Habit of Mind: Engagement

Preparing to participate in a diverse democracy

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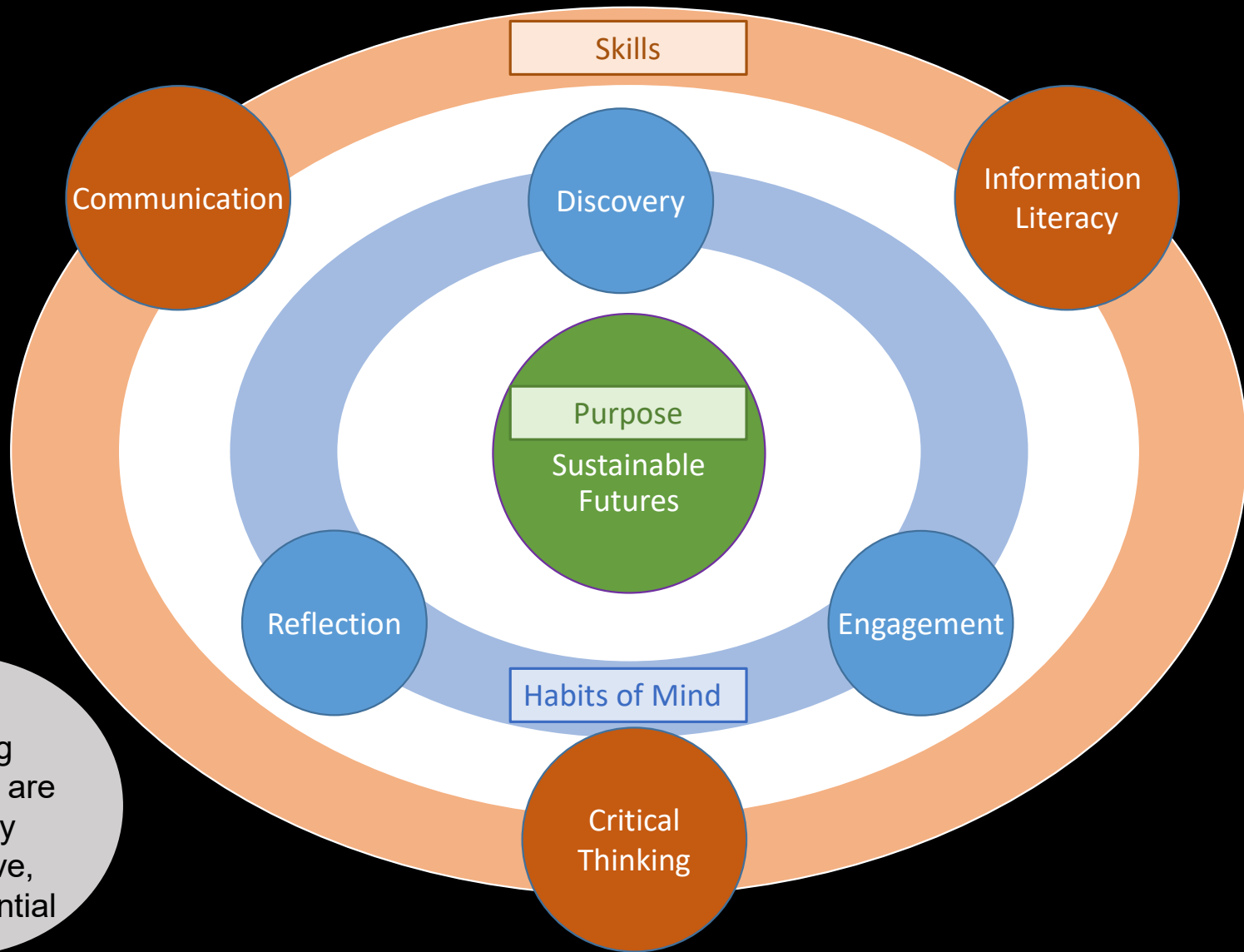
## **Communication:**

**Effective expression, argumentation, and communication of ideas and sentiments to audiences**

## **Information Literacy:**

**Discerning what is true and relevant**





These learning objectives are mutually supportive, not sequential

# Each Learning Objective has a full description and three learning outcomes, for example:

## Habit of Mind: Discovery



### Learning Objective

CU Boulder students will be active members of a university community that is devoted to the advancement of knowledge and marked by creation and creativity across all areas of research, scholarship, creative work, and innovation. They will cultivate curiosity and develop new ways of thinking, working, and living by participating in applied learning and invention and publicly presenting their research, scholarship, and creative work.



### Learning Outcomes

Graduates of CU Boulder will be able to:

1. Articulate and defend to others positions, theories, practices, and/or methods on a topic they have defined and researched.
2. Investigate phenomena from multiple and distinct disciplinary perspectives, using ideas from one perspective to inform and critique another, and analyzing points of agreement and disagreement.
3. Synthesize diverse ideas in creative and innovative ways to craft novel insights, new conceptual models, and/or practical solutions to real-world problems.

# Here's another Habit of Mind example:

## Habit of Mind: Engagement



### Learning Objective

CU Boulder students will know how to make positive contributions to a diverse world. As citizens and leaders, students will engage productively across differences to identify and address barriers to inclusion, equity, and sustainability. Citizenship involves developing an orientation to the public good—understanding that this concept is always contested—and a commitment to democratic processes to address differences. Leadership involves promoting collaboration, motivating others, and elevating the strengths of individuals.



### Learning Outcomes

Graduates of CU Boulder will be able to:

1. Articulate a personal approach to leadership and community engagement and an orientation to the public good, recognizing that the public good is contested and leadership and engagement can take many forms across different communities and cultures.
2. Participate in respectful and empathetic dialogue to explore barriers to inclusion, equity, and sustainable futures, recognizing how histories, cultures, and values shape identities, practices, and social positionings and valuing the diverse perspectives of others.
3. Engage publicly through activities that positively contribute to their communities, such as community-based learning, volunteering, and internships and publicly engaged research, scholarship and creative work.

# Here's a Skill example:

## Skill: Communication



### Learning Objective

CU Boulder students will be able to use appropriate media (written, spoken, visual, symbolic, digital) for effective expression, argumentation, and communication of ideas and sentiments to audiences.



### Learning Outcomes

Graduates of CU Boulder will be able to:

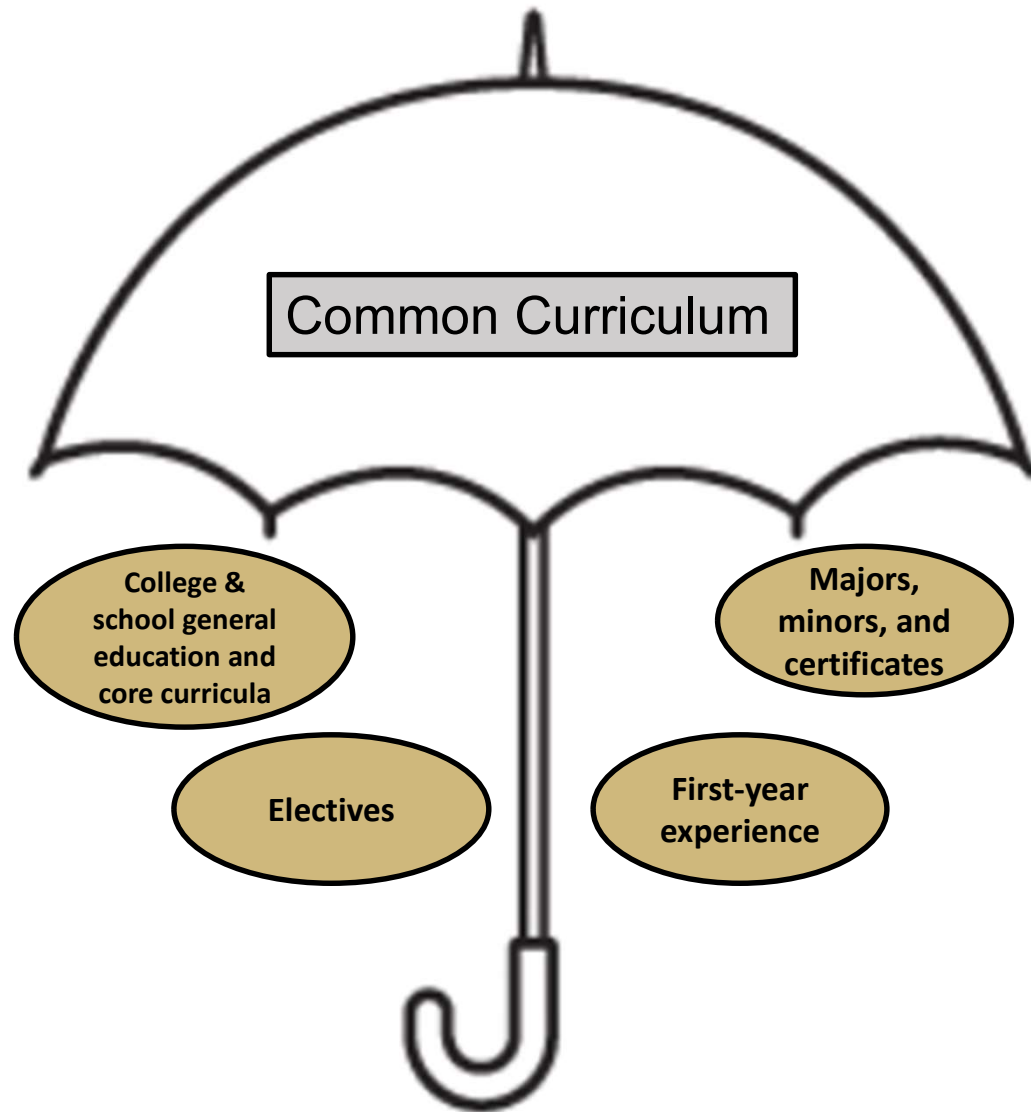
1. Write and speak logically, with clarity, and with originality, using the process of composition to enhance intellectual discovery and unravel complexities of thought.
2. Demonstrate facility with the fundamentals of persuasion as these are adapted to a variety of situations and audiences.
3. Demonstrate advanced facility in the modes of communication most relevant to their particular majors or prospective professions.

## How will the Common Curriculum be structured?

The common curriculum's learning objectives will be realized through the curricular pathways of all the schools, colleges, and undergraduate degree programs at CU Boulder, including both general education (or core) requirements and the curricula of specific majors, minors, and certificates.

In addition, the common curriculum will incorporate the First Year Experience, which focuses on introducing students to academic life in higher education and reinforcing skills of study, citizenship, and self-care.

Thus, the common curriculum's objectives will span all levels of the undergraduate experience and be offered through both curricular and co-curricular activities.



An outdoor theater with stone seating and a stage, with a brick building in the background. The theater is set in a courtyard with trees and a brick building in the background. The text "Next steps" is overlaid in the center of the image.

Next steps

## Spring and fall 2022: Campus input; finalization and approval of learning objectives and outcomes

- \* Week of April 11, 2022: Committee publishes full draft of Common Curriculum learning objectives and learning outcomes
- \* April 2022: Open forums
- \* Date TBD: CCPC revises based on input & submits proposal to Provost
- \* Fall 2022: Further input & discussion opportunities
- \* Fall 2022: Faculty approval of learning objectives/outcomes and high-level structure (approval process TBD with assistance of BFA)
- \* Fall 2022: Formation of implementation group
- \* Accompanying implementation: Creation of an assessment plan



Read the learning objectives on our web site

[www.colorado.edu/academicfutures/common-curriculum](http://www.colorado.edu/academicfutures/common-curriculum)

# April open forums

Tuesday, April 12, 9:30–10:30 a.m.

Monday, April 18, 3–4 p.m.

Thursday, April 21, 10:30–11:30 a.m.

Tuesday, April 26, 9–10 a.m.

Register at

[www.colorado.edu/academicfutures/common-curriculum](http://www.colorado.edu/academicfutures/common-curriculum)

## Other ways to give input

Send email to: [commoncurriculum@colorado.edu](mailto:commoncurriculum@colorado.edu)

Follow developments at:

[www.colorado.edu/academicfutures/common-curriculum](http://www.colorado.edu/academicfutures/common-curriculum)

Expect more input opportunities in the fall semester

Appendix:

Common Curriculum Planning Committee  
Charge & Membership

## Provost's charge to the Common Curriculum Planning Committee, September 23, 2021:

*"I charge you . . . [with] the identification and design development of a common curriculum through which our undergraduate students will achieve shared learning goals that address integrative values and common touchpoints throughout the undergraduate career. I seek your guidance in proposing campus-wide learning goals that reflect both a deliberate statement about who we are as a university and that complement and enhance all of our educational programs."*

For the full charge, see [www.colorado.edu/academicfutures/common-curriculum](http://www.colorado.edu/academicfutures/common-curriculum)

### Membership structure:

- \* Ten faculty, representing all the schools and colleges with undergraduate degrees (including all three divisions of A&S), the University Libraries, and BFA
- \* Three staff members, representing Student Affairs, Undergrad Education, and Arts & Sciences General Education administration
- \* One undergraduate student
- \* One graduate student

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