

BFA Common Curriculum Working Group Report

Summary

Between September 2025 and February 2026, the BFA Common Curriculum Working Group fulfilled its charge to make recommendations on the implementation of the Common Curriculum. The Working Group directed most of its efforts during this period to determining the specific areas of the undergraduate curriculum where the Learning Outcomes of the Common Curriculum will be delivered: various areas of each college's and school's general education or core requirements; a course required for entering students; and the requirements of each major. The Working Group also determined recommendations for deferring full implementation of some of the Learning Outcomes related to the overall purpose of the Common Curriculum since they will require further curricular development by the faculty and support from the administration.

Process

Following the BFA Chair's charge on September 22, 2025 (Appendix 1) to form the Common Curriculum Working Group, the BFA Chair-elect invited representatives from across the various colleges and schools that engage in undergraduate instruction, including the three divisions of the College of Arts & Sciences, to participate in the work of the Working Group (Appendix 2). All faculty members of the Working Group had significant experience with curricular planning and development on the Boulder campus. Many of them had served previously either on the planning committee that authored the [Common Curriculum](#) or more recently on the [Climate Justice, Sustainability and Education Working Group](#), sponsored by the Center for Teaching & Learning in collaboration with the BFA. The Chair-elect also invited the advisory participation of non-voting subject matter experts representing the Arts & Sciences dean's office curricular group, the Office of Academic Planning and Assessment, and the Environmental Center. The interim dean and vice provost for undergraduate education and the university registrar were also invited to attend selected meetings to advise on their areas of expertise.

Prior to the first meeting on October 23, 2025, members of the Working Group reviewed the Common Curriculum Learning Outcomes (LOs). During the meeting Erika Swain, Assistant Director of Academic Compliance and State Authorization, described the process of aligning those LOs with the General Education Requirements of the College of Arts and Sciences. Those Gen Ed Requirements were chosen because they serve as the template for the Gen Ed. Requirements in the other colleges, and many students in the other colleges fulfill at least some of their requirements through courses offered by A&S.

Using a spreadsheet crosswalk (Appendix 3), committee members then evaluated the efficacy of the A&S Gen Ed. Requirements for fulfilling each Learning Outcome, identified in the Common Curriculum. That work took place prior to and during the next meeting on November 6th. Following that meeting, Working Group members were surveyed to identify LOs where the Gen Ed

Requirements were well aligned with the common Curriculum and LOs where they were not. The results of the survey, including detailed feedback (Appendix 4), were discussed in the meeting the following week (November 13).

Following that meeting and the ensuing Fall and Winter Breaks, a new crosswalk was developed that proposed mechanisms for fulfilling the Common Curriculum LOs that were determined not to align closely with the A&S Gen Ed Requirements. More specifically, the Working Group evaluated how well major requirements, implemented by departments, and classes required for entering students such as those offered in connection with the forthcoming Residential Learning Communities (RLCs) could fulfill the LOs that the Gen Ed Requirements did not cover (Appendix 5).

Following that discussion the Working Group was then surveyed again to determine the remaining concerns. Two main challenges emerged. First, much of the content of the LOs associated with the overall purpose of the Common Curriculum, which address sustainability, seemed to be outside the wherewithal of the departments to deliver by the Fall of 2027; the Working Group discussed options for implementing a portion of those LOs but deferring the remainder for further analysis and implementation support. (This discussion and its conclusions are described below.) Second, the Residential Learning Communities (RLCs) will need substantial support to deliver the two LOs assigned to them to all incoming students by the Fall of 2027. These concerns will need to be the focus of the administration's planned implementation.

To address the Working Group's concerns about the LOs associated with the overall purpose of the Common Curriculum and to clarify the status of the course required for incoming students (offered via RLCs or other mechanisms designed by the schools and colleges), the Chair-elect and the Vice Chancellor for Academic Planning and Assessment drew up a plan that revised the crosswalk (Appendix 6). This plan distributed the bulk of the Common Curriculum LOs to be fulfilled by college and school Gen Ed. requirements, a required course for entering students, and the individual majors, beginning with students entering in fall 2027. The plan also designated some of the LOs of the overall purpose of the Common Curriculum for later implementation following further faculty discussion. Following the final meeting on February 12, 2026, the faculty members with a vote on the Working Group voted seven in favor, one opposed, and two not voting to approve the plan outlined in Appendix 6.

Recommendations for the Common Curriculum Overall Learning Outcomes

While the Working Group expresses confidence in the implementation plan for the 18 Learning Outcomes associated with the skills and habits of mind, outlined in the Common Curriculum, significant reservations have been expressed regarding the implementation of many of the overarching Common Curriculum Learning Outcomes associated with sustainability of the self, society, and the planet. Those outcomes are associated with the overall purpose of the Common Curriculum and are especially important in terms of the strategic direction of the campus's curricular development.

Several thoughts have led us to recommend that most of these higher-level Learning Outcomes remain a focus for future curricular development rather than be part of the Fall 2027 implementation of the Common Curriculum. Because the general education requirements of the colleges do not specifically prioritize sustainability of the self, society, and the planet, individual departments will need time to ensure that their required courses address these outcomes. Although many departments meet these long-term goals, others do not or do so only tangentially. To ensure a more thorough and uniform implementation of these higher-level Learning Outcomes, the Working Group recommends the development of processes and timelines whereby departments are supported in their efforts to advance sustainability of the self, society, and the planet.

There is one exception. LO 2 of the overall purpose of the Common Curriculum expects students to be able to “explain different discipline-specific definitions of and approaches to sustainability and how sustainable solutions may be achieved through collaboration among different disciplines.” Because this LO has two components, the Working Group recommends that it be split into two Learning Outcomes instead of one. Furthermore, the first part of the LO seems achievable by the Fall of 2027: “explain different discipline-specific approaches to sustainability.” Therefore, the Working Group recommends including this learning outcome in the Fall 2027 implementation.

Appendix 1: Committee Charge



Boulder Faculty Assembly

UNIVERSITY OF COLORADO BOULDER

Proposal for Faculty Working Group – Common Curriculum Implementation

The BFA Chair will appoint a Faculty Working Group (FWG) to make recommendations for the implementation of the Common Curriculum. The BFA ExCom will make reasonable efforts to include representatives from all affected colleges and schools at CU Boulder that offer undergraduate degrees. FWG members will be expected to serve no later than November 1, 2027, with the outcome of providing recommendations regarding implementation of the Common Curriculum to the BFA Chair, who will forward them to the Provost.

The FWG is designed to be the official faculty voice on the implementation of the Common Curriculum. Each of the affected colleges on the Boulder campus will have one voting member with one exception; Arts and Sciences will have three voting members, one from each of the Arts and Sciences divisions. In addition, the committee may include additional non-voting members at the discretion of the FWG chair and with the approval of the BFA Chair.

The committee's charge is as follows:

1. To collaborate with the Vice Chancellor and Senior Vice Provost for Academic Planning and Assessment to determine fundamental principles for aligning courses offered at CU Boulder with the learning outcomes identified in the Common Curriculum.
2. To leverage existing work completed on sustainability education, authored by the 2024-2025 Climate, Sustainability, Justice, and Education Working group, which developed a set of learning objectives that closely align with some of the learning objectives of the Common Curriculum.
3. To bridge FWG activities to the eventual formation of a Campus Curriculum Committee, advisory to the Provost, whose responsibilities will include ongoing oversight of the Common Curriculum.
4. To provide a brief summary of the committee's progress in achieving its goals to the BFA Chair in January 2026, May 2026, and October 2026.

Boulder Faculty Assembly (BFA)
Norlin Library – E138
University of Colorado Boulder
Boulder, CO 80309

303-492-6271

www.colorado.edu/bfa

Appendix 2: Working Group Participants

Faculty Members on the Working Group:

David Paradis	BFA Chair-elect
Garrett Bredeson	A&S AHUM
Lisa Barlow	A&S RAP
Laura Michaelis	A&S Social Sciences
Azza Kamal	CMDI
Sarah Stanford McIntyre	Engineering - Herbst Center
Will Lindsay	Education
Jennifer Bone	Leeds
Mark Arnett	Music
Caroline Sinkinson	Libraries
Roseanna Neupauer	Engineering

Subject Matter Experts Advising the Working Group

Katherine Eggert	VC Academic Planning and Assessment
Alejandro Murillo	eCenter
Kristi Wold-McCormick	Registrar's Office
Erika Swain	Compliance
Patrick Tally	Asst. Dean A&S

Appendix 3: Sample Crosswalk, Using “Discovery” Habit of Mind

Common Curriculum Habit of Mind: Discovery	A&S Gen Ed Distribution Requirement: Natural Science
Learning Objective: Preparing to Be a Lifelong Thinker and Problem-Solver <i>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.</i>	<i>Natural science courses examine the physical and biological world, exploring the nature of matter, life, and the universe. They are designed to demonstrate that science is not a static list of facts, but a dynamic process that leads to knowledge. By combining observation, experimentation, and theory, students learn to formulate interpretations and conclusions through unbiased, critical application of scientific principles. Through a combination of lecture courses and laboratory or field experiences, students gain hands-on experience with scientific research. They develop expertise in measurement techniques and data interpretation, and learn the relevance of this expertise to the formation and testing of scientific hypotheses. As a result, natural science courses cultivate perspectives and intellectual skills necessary to enhance knowledge of one or more scientific disciplines, and to probe scientific issues in the context of important past discoveries and new developments.</i>
Learning Outcomes: Graduates of CU Boulder will be able to:	The Natural Sciences Gen Ed Distribution requirement is meant to ensure that students:
Evaluate positions, theories, practices, and/or methods on a topic they have defined and researched.	Understand the evolving state of knowledge in at least one scientific discipline
Investigate phenomena from multiple and distinct disciplinary perspectives, identifying points of agreement and disagreement and using ideas from one perspective to inform and critique another.	Gain experience in scientific observation and measurement, in organizing and quantifying results, in drawing conclusions from data, and in understanding the uncertainties and limitations of the results
Integrate diverse ideas in creative and innovative ways to craft novel insights, new conceptual models, and/or solutions to problems.	Learn sufficient general scientific vocabulary and methodology to acquire additional information, evaluate it critically and make informed decisions

Appendix 4: First Survey Results, Discussed Nov 13, 2025

Overview of Crosswalk Ratings

The weakest correlations are in the overviews of the two documents. The only significant divergence between faculty and administrators is in the assessment of communication, where administrators rated the connection significantly higher. Overall, the skill of communication had the highest rating, even by faculty when viewed separately.

Group	Overall	Discovery	Reflection	Engagement	Communication
Everyone (13)	2.2	3.1	3.2	3.1	4.1
Faculty avg (10)	2.2	2.9	3.2	3.0	3.8
Admin avg (3)	2.3	3.7	3.3	3.3	5.0

Please take the following analyses with a grain of salt; they are not intended to be definitive. Instead, I am raising topics for discussion.

Summary of Comments on crosswalks

I. Strengths to consider

1. Communication Skills

2. Interdisciplinary inquiry – maybe overlooked when considering the “Overall” ratings.”

a. Analyzing and interpreting texts across a range of genres

b. The CC Purpose LO #2, which emphasizes understanding how different disciplines relate to each other, aligns "really well" with the A&S Mission goal of understanding the world in all its interrelated dimensions, through critical inquiry.

3. The following strengths were noted in each of the habits of mind:

a. Engagement and Social Sciences (SS): The alignment between the CC Engagement LOs and A&S Social Sciences is described as "intuitively strong." Both requirements compel students to comprehend how individuals relate to broader cultural, historical, and social structures.

b. Discovery and Natural Sciences (NS): There is a strong assertion of "Very good alignment here". It is likely that if students pursue Natural Sciences outcomes, they will also have fulfilled the CC Discovery outcomes.

c. Reflection and Arts and Humanities (AHUM): Both frameworks share the expectation that students engage with ethical questions and reflect on human experience. However, only one assessment suggested this alignment was strong, rating it with a 5.

Critiques

1. Gaps in thematic emphasis, differences in scope, and a lack of explicit alignment regarding student action and self-reflection.

a. The Biggest Gaps: The correlation based on the core theme of sustainability is described as the weakest alignment, requiring one to "really squint" to see the theme reflected in the A&S GenEd MLGs. Sustainability and engagement seem to be the biggest gaps in GenEd when compared to the CC

b. Scope: Communication skill of writing in A&S Gen ed is much narrower than communication in CC.

2. Lack of emphasis on Sustainability, Equity, and Justice. While these ideas are central to the Common curriculum, they do not appear much in the learning outcomes and in the A&S Gen Ed requirements. Consequently, this element of sustainability of society requires a plan moving forward.

a. A primary purpose of the CC is to help students work toward a “just and equitable future.” This aspect of the CC is not part of the A&S GenEd mission and learning goals.

3. Active Citizenship/Public Good: The CC places a greater emphasis on students understanding their own role in communities and fostering change, viewing students as active and valued agents. Key concepts like "inclusion," "equity," and "sustainable futures" are absent in the Social Science general education requirements, despite being present in the CC Engagement learning outcomes.

Overall critique:

The situation of the crosswalk comparisons is like trying to fit a detailed, multi-tool Swiss Army knife (the broad, specific, and action-oriented Common Curriculum) into a simple, single-use sheath (the A&S General Education requirements); while the blade (skills like communication and critical inquiry) fits, the additional specialized tools (sustainability, civic engagement, self-reflection) stick out and require significant adjustment or redefinition to map them neatly.

Appendix 5: Working Group Crosswalk Identifying Additional Mechanisms for fulfilling the CC Habits of Mind and Skills LOs

Whatever their college, school, or major at CU Boulder, students will be able to . . .	Learning outcomes that must be delivered through A&S (or other college/school) courses designated for distribution requirements	Learning outcomes that must be delivered through the RLC class, irrespective of college/school location or number of credits	Learning outcomes that must be delivered through designated courses in every major	Unclear; to discuss
Habit of Mind - Discovery LO 1: Evaluate positions, theories, practices, and/or methods on a topic they have defined and researched.	Courses designated as Natural Sciences			
Habit of Mind - Discovery LO 2: Investigate phenomena from multiple and distinct disciplinary perspectives, identifying points of agreement and disagreement and using ideas from one perspective to inform and critique another.	Courses designated as Natural Sciences			
Habit of Mind - Discovery LO 3: Integrate diverse ideas in creative and innovative ways to craft novel insights, new conceptual models, and/or solutions to problems.	Courses designated as Natural Sciences			
Habit of Mind - Reflection LO 1: Describe their own identities, beliefs, and social positionings in relation to those of other people	Courses designated as Arts & Humanities			
Habit of Mind - Reflection LO 2: Apply ethical reasoning to comprehend how their actions affect themselves and others, and how the policies, functions, and actions of systems and institutions affect individuals and groups of people.	Courses designated as Arts & Humanities			
Habit of Mind - Reflection LO 3: Practice metacognitive strategies to assess and foster their own learning and well-being		Learning outcome assigned to the RLC class		
Habit of Mind - Engagement LO 1: Define a personal approach to leadership and community engagement and an orientation to the public good with respect to different communities and cultures.	Courses designated as Social Sciences			
Habit of Mind - Engagement LO 2: Participate in respectful and empathetic dialogue to explore barriers to inclusion, equity, and sustainable futures.	Courses designated as Social Sciences			
Habit of Mind - Engagement LO 3: Engage in activities that positively contribute to their communities, such as community-based learning, volunteering, and internships and publicly engaged research, scholarship, and creative work.			Learning outcome assigned to at least one course required for the major (Note that "publicly engaged" was defined broadly by the original CC planning committee; can include, e.g., the public of other students in the major)	
Skill - Communication LO 1: Write and speak logically, clearly, and with originality, using the process of composition to enhance intellectual discovery and express complex thought.	Courses designated as Lower Division Written Communication			
Skill - Communication LO 2: Demonstrate facility with the fundamentals of persuasion as these are adapted to a variety of situations and audiences.	Courses designated as Lower Division Written Communication			
Skill - Communication LO 2: Demonstrate advanced facility in the modes of communication most relevant to their particular majors or prospective professions.	Courses designated as Upper Division Written Communication			
Skill - Information Literacy LO 1: Practice inquiry as an open-ended, social process of evaluating information and participating ethically in communities of learning.		Learning outcome assigned to the RLC class		
Skill - Information Literacy LO 2: Analyze how social, legal, technological, and economic factors affect the creation, dissemination, accessibility and use of information.			Learning outcome assigned to at least one course required for the major	
Skill - Information Literacy LO 3: Recognize that information evolves and emerges from particular contexts and that authority and ways of knowing are legitimized within particular situations.	Courses designated as Upper Division Written Communication			
Skill - Critical Thinking LO 1: Review material through attentive reading, listening, research, observation, and experience.			Learning outcome assigned to at least one course required for the major	
Skill - Critical Thinking LO 2: Evaluate sources of information, recognizing the different perspectives, identities, and social positions that may inform those sources.			Learning outcome assigned to at least one course required for the major	
Skill - Critical Thinking LO 3: Apply learning to create original arguments, craft solutions to problems, and participate in informed discussion and collaboration.			Learning outcome assigned to at least one course required for the major	

Appendix 6: Approved Implementation Plan

Whatever their college, school, or major at CU Boulder, students will be able to . . .	Learning outcomes that will be delivered through College/School courses designated for distribution requirements	Learning outcomes that will be delivered through a first-semester class required for all new students (e.g., RLC class)	Learning outcomes that will be delivered through designated required courses in every major	Learning outcomes that require future action as part of CC implementation; roll-out will be post-Fall 2027
Habit of Mind - Discovery LO 1: Evaluate positions, theories, practices, and/or methods on a topic they have defined and researched.	Courses designated as Natural Sciences			
Habit of Mind - Discovery LO 2: Investigate phenomena from multiple and distinct disciplinary perspectives, identifying points of agreement and disagreement and using ideas from one perspective to inform and critique another.	Courses designated as Natural Sciences			
Habit of Mind - Discovery LO 3: Integrate diverse ideas in creative and innovative ways to craft novel insights, new conceptual models, and/or solutions to problems.	Courses designated as Natural Sciences			
Habit of Mind - Reflection LO 1: Describe their own identities, beliefs, and social positionings in relation to those of other people	Courses designated as Arts & Humanities			
Habit of Mind - Reflection LO 2: Apply ethical reasoning to comprehend how their actions affect themselves and others, and how the policies, functions, and actions of systems and institutions affect individuals and groups of people.	Courses designated as Arts & Humanities			
Habit of Mind - Reflection LO 3: Practice metacognitive strategies to assess and foster their own learning and well-being		Learning outcome assigned to a first-semester class required for all new students		
Habit of Mind - Engagement LO 1: Define a personal approach to leadership and community engagement and an orientation to the public good with respect to different communities and cultures.	Courses designated as Social Sciences			
Habit of Mind - Engagement LO 2: Participate in respectful and empathetic dialogue to explore barriers to inclusion, equity, and sustainable futures.	Courses designated as Social Sciences			
Habit of Mind - Engagement LO 3: Engage in activities that positively contribute to their communities, such as community-based learning, volunteering, and internships and publicly engaged research, scholarship, and creative work. (Note that "publicly engaged" was defined broadly by the original CC planning committee; can include, e.g., the public of other students in the major)			Learning outcome assigned to at least one course required for the major	
Skill - Communication LO 1: Write and speak logically, clearly, and with originality, using the process of composition to enhance intellectual discovery and express complex thought.	Courses designated as Lower Division Written Communication			
Skill - Communication LO 2: Demonstrate facility with the fundamentals of persuasion as these are adapted to a variety of situations and audiences.	Courses designated as Lower Division Written Communication			
Skill - Communication LO 2: Demonstrate advanced facility in the modes of communication most relevant to their particular majors or prospective professions.	Courses designated as Upper Division Written Communication (or equivalent for non-A&S)			
Skill - Information Literacy LO 1: Practice inquiry as an open-ended, social process of evaluating information and participating ethically in communities of learning.		Learning outcome assigned to a first-semester class required for all new students		
Skill - Information Literacy LO 2: Analyze how social, legal, technological, and economic factors affect the creation, dissemination, accessibility and use of information.			Learning outcome assigned to at least one course required for the major	
Skill - Information Literacy LO 3: Recognize that information evolves and emerges from particular contexts and that authority and ways of knowing are legitimized within particular situations.	Courses designated as Upper Division Written Communication (or equivalent for non-A&S)			

Whatever their college, school, or major at CU Boulder, students will be able to . . .	Learning outcomes that will be delivered through College/School courses designated for distribution requirements	Learning outcomes that will be delivered through a first-semester class required for all new students (e.g., RLC class)	Learning outcomes that will be delivered through designated required courses in every major	Learning outcomes that require future action as part of CC implementation; rollout will be post-fall 2027
Skill - Critical Thinking LO 1: Review material through attentive reading, listening, research, observation, and experience.			Learning outcome assigned to at least one course required for the major	
Skill - Critical Thinking LO 2: Evaluate sources of information, recognizing the different perspectives, identities, and social positions that may inform those sources.			Learning outcome assigned to at least one course required for the major	
Skill - Critical Thinking LO 3: Apply learning to create original arguments, craft solutions to problems, and participate in informed discussion and collaboration.			Learning outcome assigned to at least one course required for the major	
Common Curriculum - Purpose LO 1: Discern their role in advancing resilient communities and demonstrate the ability to act as stewards for sustainable futures.				This learning outcome may need to be rewritten to constitute part of the CC mission statement, since it is not a specific learning outcome but rather the result of all the other learning outcomes being met.
Common Curriculum - Purpose LO 2.1: Explain different discipline-specific definitions of and approaches to sustainable practices. (Note the slight revision of the wording from the original: original wording was just "sustainability," and revision to "sustainable practices" gives more specificity and direction to the learning outcome.)			Learning outcome assigned to at least one course required for the major	
Common Curriculum - Purpose LO 2.2: Explain how sustainable solutions may be achieved through collaboration among different disciplines.				CC implementation will set a process and timeline for implementing this learning outcome across all school/college/major requirements
Common Curriculum - Purpose LO 3: Articulate how specific actions foster individual well-being, social equity, long-term economic vitality, and the health of the natural environment.				This learning outcome may need to be rewritten to constitute part of the CC mission statement, since it is not a specific learning outcome but rather the result of all the other learning outcomes being met.