

Baccalaureate Review Task Force

Proposed purpose statement, goal definitions, and learning outcomes

September 16, 2010

Nothing happens unless first we dream—Carl Sandburg

Over the past 18 months, the Northern Illinois University (NIU) Baccalaureate Review Task Force listened to dreams. Reflecting the care and sense of community that characterize the university, over 1,200 NIU students, faculty, staff, administrators, alumni, and employers contributed their input to develop a shared vision and understanding of what NIU students should learn. Developed through a process designed to be thorough, inclusive, and transparent, the task force proposes the following purpose statement, goal definitions, and baccalaureate learning outcomes:

Purpose statement

The NIU baccalaureate degree experience enables graduates to think critically, create, and communicate by participating in an engaged learning environment to prepare for success in a diverse, global society. This learning environment emphasizes the importance of context. Graduates will be prepared to understand the impact of history on modern society, the relationship between our society and others around the globe, and the unity and diversity of the American experience. Students will be exposed to a broad range of experiences and knowledge through the study of natural science, social science, the humanities, and the arts. Students will develop their knowledge, capacities, and abilities through an intentionally developed curriculum that integrates general education, the students' majors, and opportunities outside the classroom. NIU graduates will become life-long learners who are empowered, informed, and responsible citizens.

Goal definitions—The “Three Cs”

Critical thinking—involves literacy, reflectivity, and understanding how to gather and make sense of various forms of information before accepting or formulating an opinion or conclusion.

Creativity—uses a combination of imagination, intellect, insight, and emotion to solve problems and transform existing ideas, images, or techniques in innovative and original ways.

Communication—includes the mastery of basic skills, such as language, technology, and collaboration.

Baccalaureate learning outcomes

NIU’s current baccalaureate goals are very broad and simply written. The task force would like to maintain that style. Learning goals and outcomes become more explicit as one goes from baccalaureate goals, to general education, departments, and then to the major.

The university’s **current** baccalaureate learning goals include:

- (a) effective habits in logical thinking,
- (b) communication skills,
- (c) quantitative skills,
- (d) an understanding of and ability to use modern technology,
- (e) sophisticated practices in using resources,
- (f) mature interpersonal behavior in various settings, and
- (g) those unique skills necessary for one’s chosen area of in-depth study.

The **proposed** baccalaureate learning outcomes include:

- Integrate knowledge of global interconnections and interdependencies
- Exhibit intercultural competencies with people of diverse backgrounds and perspectives
- Analyze issues that interconnect human life and the natural world
- Demonstrate critical, creative, and independent thought
- Communicate clearly and effectively
- Collaborate with others to achieve specific goals
- Use and combine appropriate quantitative and qualitative reasoning skills to address questions and solve problems
- Synthesize knowledge and skills relevant to one's major or particular fields of study and apply them creatively to develop innovative outcomes

Please visit the NIU Baccalaureate Review web page for additional information regarding this initiative. (<http://www.niu.edu/bacreview/index.shtml>).