

Faculty Senate Proposal

Bulldog Foundations

Beginning in the Fall of 2020, all Drake students entering directly from high school or transferring with fewer than 30 hours of college credit must complete Bulldog Foundations during their first year of enrollment. Bulldog Foundations is a one-credit hour course that helps students explore concepts and develop skills that are crucial for development of meaningful personal lives, professional accomplishments, and responsible global citizenship. Students will explore social justice issues, consider life skills necessary for success, and refine academic strategies. A student should normally take their Bulldog Foundations in the Fall term when the majority of sections of the class is offered. Students transferring to Drake at mid-year, those who failed or dropped their Fall term Bulldog Foundations course should enroll in the Bulldog Foundations courses available in the Spring term. Those students who are enrolled in 18 credits or more during the Fall semester of their first year due to academic or financial aid requirements may take an online version of Bulldog Foundations during the J-term or the spring offering of the course. Students seeking to take Bulldog Foundations in a term other than Fall will need to seek Dean's office approval.

FAQ

In Fall of 2018, Drake introduced Bulldog Foundations, a one-credit class for undergraduate students to help them develop skills to be successful members of the Drake Community. The course covers issues of academic success, wellbeing, and cultural competency. Both because of student requests to see more emphasis on these topics and because of the growing need for our students to increase skills in this area, the Faculty Senate is looking at expanding enrollment in this class. By the end of the semester, Senate will likely vote on whether to make this one-credit course required. To provide you with as much information as possible on the class, so that you can share your informed decision with your senator, here is a Q&A about Bulldog Foundations:

1. **What is the purpose of Bulldog Foundations?**

Bulldog Foundations is a one-credit hour course that helps students explore concepts and develop skills that are crucial for development of meaningful personal lives, professional accomplishments, and responsible global citizenship. Students will explore social justice issues, consider life skills necessary for success, and refine academic strategies.

2. **What topics does Bulldog Foundations cover?**

Equity and Inclusion

- How Do We Navigate?
- Who's Here? Who's Not Here?
- Who Benefits?

Time Management and Study Strategies

Stress Identification and Management

Bystander Intervention

Healthy Relationships and Violence Prevention

Resilience and Mindfulness

3. **Aren't these topics taught in FYS?**

FYS is designed to introduce students to academic culture and it strives to sharpen students' writing, critical thinking, verbal communication and information literacy skills. FYS is heavily focused on reading and writing, whereas Bulldog Foundations is focused non-cognitive and academic success skills. The purpose of Bulldog Foundations is to help our students develop in a way to be successful students and community members.

4. **Who wrote the curriculum for Bulldog Foundations?**

The curriculum was developed by a collaborative effort of subject matter experts and Drake faculty and staff. For example, the Healthy Relationship and Violence Prevention topic was written by the Violence Prevention Coordinator, and revised by Drake faculty and staff.

5. **Was there significant tenured/tenure-track faculty involvement in the creation and assessment of this class?**

Tenured and tenure track faculty have been involved in the development and assessment of the curriculum during every part of the process.

6. **Who teaches Bulldog foundations?**

A call went out last spring to invite members of the Drake community to apply to teach Bulldog Foundations. There was a surplus of applicants, and the those who were selected came from around the university. Both tenured faculty and staff, as well as one Board of Trustees member taught the class. In the future, the class will continue to be taught by those who apply and demonstrate excellent teaching skills.

7. **What student gains were demonstrated through this class?**

Students enrolled in Bulldog Foundations were asked to reflect on their learning throughout the class through a survey. The following are results and statistically significant findings from that study. You can review the data analysis in its entirety in the BF Stats Analysis pdf.

The majority of students who took the class perceived gains in the following areas:

- Learning about my own and others' identities helped me think about my own identities
- Learning about different values and cultures helped me better understand myself
- This course helped equip me to engage respectfully across difference
- This course helped me to develop strategies to connect with university resources
- I learned about strategies to intervene or address negative behaviors within my community

Women had statistically significant higher self-reported gains than men on the following measures:

- Learning about different values and cultures helped me better understand myself
- This course provided me with effective learning strategies
- I learned how to enhance my academic success
- This course provided me with effective time management strategies
- This course provided me with effective self-care strategies

Men self-reported statistically significant higher gains on the following measure:

- This course helped me think about my own and others' identities

Two measures showed statistically significant differences in self-reported gains for students of color:

- I learned how to enhance my academic success
- This course provided me with effective self-care strategies

Students of color also more strongly agreed than white students, at a statistically significant rate the following statement:

- I would recommend taking a Bulldog Foundations course to other students

Lastly, students enrolled in Bulldog Foundations were retained from Fall to Spring at a higher rate than the overall EFR retention rate – 94.8% compared to 92.8%.

8. **What aspects of Bulldog Foundations needs improvement?**

During the first offering of the course, the committee working on administration and curriculum for the class identified areas for improvement after reviewing the course evaluations and feedback from both students and faculty. A few components of the class were identified as needing adjustment, including: class size, re-order modules – academic resources needed earlier than we expected and balancing student commitment with the credit/no credit.

For this spring, aspects of the course have been improved, such as creating reading guides for some of the components. Additionally, some of the homework has been edited or shifted around. The course will continue to be evaluated on a semester basis and improvements will continue to be made as long as we offer the course.

9. **What are students saying about Bulldog Foundations?**

The concluding assignment for Bulldog Foundations instructed students to write a letter to a future first-year student. In this letter, students commented on what they took away from the class. Here are some quotes from their letters:

“One thing that surprised me about this course was that I thought this course was about preparing you for college academics, but it is more about preparing for college life and life on campus”

"Bulldog foundations has been one of the most rewarding courses I have taken and it is only first semester of my first year. It is highly recommended by me to take within the first two semesters here for a foundation of a little bit of everything. I personally recommend this as it has taught me new skills such as stress and time management, it has made me aware of events with bystander intervention and the necessary steps to take if an event occurred in which help was needed, and additionally a game plan for the rest of my future such as setting goals and how to focus on what is most important.”

"During my time in Bulldog Foundations, I learned a lot about myself. I learned how to be proud of my various identities, something I have struggled with for a while. I also learned that what makes me different does not have to divide me from others. I learned more about myself than anything through reflection and application. After being presented the content, I would think how I have used it in the past and how I could use it in the future. After class, I also tried to think about how it all connects to my life personally. It was difficult for me to take the content from the class and apply it to my life Drake. I never had to do that before, but this curriculum pushed me to, and I learned more because of it.”

10. How will requiring Bulldog Foundations impact students in credit heavy majors?

The committee that has overseen the creation and implementation of Bulldog Foundations has met with all Associate Deans to consider how to enroll high credit students in the class. There are a few select majors where students take 18 credits and above in their first semester of college. For these students, Bulldog Foundations will be offered online over J-term or in the spring semester. Their advisor will need to certify that their major, program, or scholarship requires them to take 18 credits or more in the first semester of their college career.

11. How will Bulldog Foundations be funded?

Bulldog Foundations instructors receive a \$1000 stipend for teaching the one credit class, which aligns with adjunct teaching policies. Funds supporting Bulldog Foundations currently come from the Academic Affairs budget. Additionally, for full time faculty, Bulldog Foundations can be a part of their full time teaching load, with permission from their department chair or Associate Dean.

12. Do other schools require a class like this?

The following schools have a comparable first-year course similar to Bulldog Foundations as a part of their curriculum:

- DePaul University
- Loyola University
- Marquette University
- Bradley University
- Gonzaga University