Core Curriculum Review Committee (CCRC) and University Board of Undergraduate Studies (UBUS) feedback on the 15 Core workgroup proposals

Following the guidelines of the Core revision process charge from the Provost and President, the CCRC and UBUS discussed the 15 Core workgroup proposals designed by faculty, staff, and alumni. Feedback from student focus groups and from other campus colleagues not serving on the CCRC and UBUS can be found along with other data on the Core revision website: http://www.marquette.edu/common-studies-revision/data-resources.php

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<th>Summary of CCRC Discussions about the Fifteen Core Structure Proposals</th>
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<td>The Core Curriculum Review Committee (CCRC) discussed the 15 structure/framework proposals for a revised Core at its two March meetings.</td>
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<td><strong>On March 9, 2016</strong>, the CCRC examined the structure proposals as follows:</td>
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<td>1. The meeting began with a “straw poll” on the 15 core structure proposals, which was conducted to facilitate the discussion of the proposals later in the meeting. The results were tallied by Core Revision Facilitation Group members Lars Olson and Sarah Feldner during the first part of the meeting.</td>
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<td>2. Following other committee business, Feldner gave an update on the process to date, including the discussion at the recent UBUS meeting, the upcoming meeting in April with the Academic Senate, and the Core Revision Website welcoming feedback on the proposals. The Provost, in consultation with President Lovell, will announce a new Core structure in May.</td>
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<td>3. Results of the straw poll were presented. Combining the “strong support and support” categories, proposal #s 14, 11, 6, and 4 had the most consistent support. (Proposals #1 and #9 had strong support from many but also had more opposed to them than #s 14, 11, 6, and 4 did.)</td>
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<td>4. Following a brief discussion of the Core revision process charge document, Olson offered a presentation on the framework proposals and how they clustered. He highlighted:</td>
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<td>- the extent to which many proposals stressed integration but often in different ways;</td>
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<td>- how pedagogy and delivery of the courses were emphasized in many of the proposals;</td>
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<td>- the use of thematic grouping of courses and/or tracks in some of the proposals; and</td>
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<td>- how many also included capstones and/or first-year seminars.</td>
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<td>5. The preliminary discussion included questions about the importance of how logistically feasible a proposal was; how easy or difficult it would be to assess; and whether it would require new courses, be team-taught, etc.</td>
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<td>6. The four most popular proposals from the straw poll were discussed.</td>
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<td>a. Proposal #4 was the first one examined. This included an overview of the proposal’s use of paired courses, writing courses, at the upper-level, and experiential learning.</td>
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<td>- CCRC members identified strengths including that it would be easy to implement, foundational courses were prominent, writing would be integrated into the major, and there was an emphasis on the arts, which fosters both creativity and integration.</td>
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<td>- Concerns included that the first-year load was heavy, that it did not offer as common of an experience as some other proposals, and that assessment could be a challenge (particularly in the courses that linked the Core to the major).</td>
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b. Proposal #6 was discussed next, including its effort to include 21st century best practices in education and Jesuit pedagogy, high impact practices in each segment of the Core (1st to 4th year experiences, service learning, faculty development, and capstone).
   - CCRC members pointed to strengths including the high impact practices (students would not just be lectured to in this Core), and its flexibility.
   - The need for faculty development was seen as both a positive and negative.

c. A discussion of proposal #11 followed, including an overview of its use of a first-year experience, using the colleges in second-tier seminars, and its reduced number of credits.
   - CCRC members highlighted strengths such as the proposed structure’s inquiry-based and question-focused approach, its emphasis on core-specific courses, and its heavy common experience.
   - Concerns included the use of a large lecture-format in first stage, less of a visible Jesuit experience compared to some other proposals, and the need for potentially significant faculty development (esp. if the topic of diversity flows through the entire core).

d. Proposal #14 was discussed, including the extent to which a kind of similar thematic core exists at a universities of a similar size and complexity to Marquette, that Marquette would bring a strong Jesuit focus into this thematic structure, how students would choose a theme which then shapes the courses they take, and the use of clusters of courses by theme and a capstone course tied to a theme.
   - CCRC members highlighted the fit with Jesuit pedagogy and the use of a set of core-specific courses as strengths.
   - Concerns included the greater need for the CCRC to play an administrative role and questions about how the thematic capstones would work.

7. Core Director John Su asked the members of the CCRC to think about the discussion and review the proposals again before the next CCRC meeting, focusing in particular on what was missing from the discussion and which components of particular proposals are particularly compelling, even if the overall proposal was not a focal point of the discussion at today’s meeting.

On March 30, 2016, the CCRC returned to the topic of the structure proposals as part of its regular meeting.
1. The discussion initially focused on terminology relating to the previous meeting’s categorization of proposals as having the CCRC’s “strong support,” “some support,” and “less support.” Language was changed to indicate “most support,” “some support,” and “least support” in order to avoid implications of qualitative judgement.

2. Discussion continued with a question about whether the CCRC’s recommendations are meant to influence the deliberations of the UAS and, ultimately, the decisions of Provost Myers and President Lovell. CRFG members Sarah Feldner and Lowell Barrington replied that while the
CCRC is just one of three representative bodies looking at the proposals in detail, the CCRC will have spent the most time and effort of these three bodies on the Core revision process and in analyzing the workgroup proposals themselves.

3. The committee worked to identify prominent themes, pedagogical approaches and high impact practices, and priorities recurring in the fifteen proposals. CRFG member Lars Olson compiled the following list from this discussion:

a. Themes

- Structure/sequence
  - Common-first year experience
  - Senior capstone courses
  - Foundational courses
  - Tiered course sequencing
- Integration
  - Seminars
  - Team-taught courses
  - Interdisciplinary courses
  - Co-curricular programming
- Global/local social justice
  - Learning in action
  - Global awareness
  - Social justice awareness
  - Diversity awareness
  - Awareness of inequalities in global and local contexts

b. Pedagogy/high impact educational practices

- Ignatian values
  - Inquiry
  - Critical reasoning
  - Reflection
- Development of writing and communication skills
- Co-curricular/service learning

c. Priorities

- The need for investment in faculty development
- The need for investment in teaching innovation (e.g., team-teaching)
4. The committee discussed the relationship between the just-completed discussion and the “most supported” workgroup proposals (i.e., #s 4, 6, 11, and 14) from the previous meeting. It was resolved to offer those proposals as the ones best representing the most commonly desired attributes and best responding to the Charge document.

5. The committee concluded its deliberation on the proposals by discussing the feasibility of the projected timeline for the Administration’s action on the recommendations of the CCRC, UBUS, and UAS, and the resulting implementation of a revised Core.
Following other business, the University Board of Undergraduate Studies turned its attention to the 15 core structure proposals submitted by working groups at Marquette this semester. Present were three members of the Core Revision Facilitation Group (Drs. John Su, Lars Olson, and Lowell Barrington).

The discussion began with Lars Olson presenting a PowerPoint overview of the Core revision process. He highlighted the emphasis in the Core revision process’s charge document on the importance of a new Core being integrative, mission-centric, and workable for Marquette’s various colleges.

A lengthy general discussion followed, which included impressions of the UBUS members of patterns in the Core structure proposals (e.g., the number of proposals that involved a “tiered” structure), and an emphasis on the need to balance flexibility with the creation of a unique Marquette experience.

The idea of an approach with three tiers was discussed, with Proposal #9 commonly used as the example. Some liked the idea of tiers with separate and distinct goals. Others were concerned that this particular example narrowed too much at the end of the Core experience. There was support for the idea of a set of foundational courses in a first tier, along with the idea that this may not be a “transformational” part of the Core but that’s okay. The discussion of foundational courses included the idea of a Jesuit foundation, highlighting for students “why they are here.” This could include smaller courses or sessions, such as helping them think about what it means to be at a university and what is different at this stage of their lives.

In discussing integration, several members mentioned Proposal #3, which focuses on a series of 1-credit seminars that could be combined with a different Core structure to improve integration across the Core. One person liked this proposal’s opening statement in the Executive Summary about what a Core really is about. Another stressed that the series of 1-credit courses would allow the University to shape how students connect the other experiences they have. Another echoed this view, arguing that the courses of the current UCCS are relatively unconnected. These interdisciplinary seminars would complement more disciplinary courses. The 1-credit seminars component would also work with high credit requirement colleges at Marquette, especially if other parts of the Core could connect to the colleges’ requirements. Some also believed interdisciplinary seminars could encourage colleges to design requirements about these themes. Possible themes that were mentioned included communications, ethics, diversity, leadership, self-awareness, and critical thinking.

The topic of Integration within the Core also touched on the idea of linking Core experiences in the classroom to outside-the-classroom experiences. There was a sense that service learning could be part of the courses in the Core rather than an additional set of requirements. Concern was expressed about requiring service learning. The idea of events on campus connected to themes in the Core had some support. Others pointed to capstone seminars as a possible place for integration, pointing out that existing capstone courses are Marquette are often not designed to be interdisciplinary.

The discussion of workability for the colleges included questions about the extent to which a tiered Core could work in a particular college’s “take” on the Core.
In considering components of different proposals rather than the entire proposal, there was conversation about the TEDx component, which could spark conversations on campus if connected to a particular theme. Others pointed out how common the idea of “global” emphasis was in the proposals. This is popular with students, but it is also important for their future prospects.