External Review Report
Marquette University Core of Common Studies
November 2014

Shirley McGuire, Associate Dean, University of San Francisco
Julian Bourg, Associate Professor, Boston College

Executive Summary

The primary conclusion of this external review of Marquette University’s Core of Common Studies (UCCS) is that a substantial review and revision of UCCS should be undertaken. University administration leadership should initiate this process, the President and/or Provost issuing a specific charge that establishes a small steering committee (its purpose, timeline, parameters, procedures, and expected outcomes). The recent arrival of President Lovell and the imminent hiring of a new Provost provide a rare opportunity to envision and develop a UCCS that more fully represents Marquette’s mission, invites faculty participation, and engages students. The steering committee should complement existing governance structures, and its purpose is to ask and answer the following questions: How does the UCCS represent the vision, goals, and mission of the university? What is the role of the UCCS in a Marquette education? How should the UCCS change? This external review report introduces a number of principles, themes, and questions that the steering committee and Marquette community may want to consider during this work.

It is normal and healthy for a university-wide program to undergo periodic top-to-bottom reevaluation. Created in 2003, and thus just over a decade old, the Marquette UCCS is primed for such a process. Reaccreditation pressures and the, sometimes acrimonious, formation of the UCCS are now in the past. Marquette does confront a unique “moment of opportunity” with respect to the central program at the heart of undergraduate education. The University also has an opportunity to become a leader among Jesuit colleges and universities by addressing the national debate about the balance between the education of the whole person and the training of the future professional. Marquette will stand out among other universities in the Midwest and nationally by weaving the Core throughout its colleges and majors, especially throughout its well-regarded professional schools. The University could serve as a model of how a Core education should look in the twenty-first century because of your distinctive institutional profile—a Jesuit liberal arts university with numerous reputable professional schools. Marquette’s institutional structure presents challenges, but also opportunities for developing undergraduate programming that directly addresses questions of flexibility and integration.

It is thus extremely urgent that the review and revision of the UCCS unfold deliberately and constructively: proactively soliciting the participation of faculty across the university, utilizing existing curricular committee structures, pursuing evidence-based planning and the strategic use of meaningful assessment data, consulting with students, employers, and other stakeholders, dialoguing with other Jesuit colleges and universities on what has worked and not worked elsewhere, experimenting with interdisciplinary and co-curricular pedagogies, and so forth. The Jesuit values of rigor, reflection, experience, imagination, conversation, and discernment should
inform both the process of Core review and revision as well as the final proposal the steering committee presents to the Core Curriculum Review Committee, University Board of Undergraduate Studies, and finally the Provost Office and the Academic Senate.

Overview

On October 8–10, 2014, Shirley McGuire (Associate Dean, University of San Francisco) and Julian Bourg (Associate Professor, Boston College) visited Marquette University as external reviewers of the University Core of Common Studies (UCCS). This is the first formal review of the UCCS as a whole since it was created in 2003. Our visit was guided by a Self-Study prepared by the Core Curriculum Review Committee (CCRC), and we were able to speak with the following individuals, committees, and constituencies during an on-campus visit:

- Margaret Callahan, Interim Provost
- Gary Meyer, Vice Provost for Undergraduate Programs and Teaching
- Linda Salchenberger, Associate Provost for Academic Planning and Budgeting
- Academic Deans (Richard Holz, Dean, Klinger College of Arts and Sciences; Susanne Foster, Associate Dean, Klinger College of Arts and Sciences; William Cullinan, Dean of the College of Health Sciences; Robert J. Deahl, Dean of the College of Professional Studies; William A. Henk, Dean of the College of Education; Maureen E. O’Brien, Associate Dean, College of Nursing; Kristina Ropella, Interim Dean of the College of Engineering; Joyce Wolburg, Associate Dean, College of Communication)
- John Su, Professor and Director of the UCCS
- Core Curriculum Review Committee
- University Assessment Committee
- University Board of Undergraduate Studies
- Academic Program Review Council
- Klinger College of Arts and Sciences Department Chairs
- Alumni, parents, employers, and students

We would like to thank all the people with whom we engaged for the thoughtfulness and care with which they approached discussion of the UCCS. In particular, we would like to underscore our gratitude to Associate Provost Linda Salchenberger for the invitation to come to Marquette, Professor John Su for his hard work and leadership in this process, and Ms. Kimberly Newman for warmly welcoming us to Milwaukee and taking care of our needs. We left Marquette with a clear sense of the qualities of and possibilities for the University Core of Common Studies.

Self-Study Summary

The UCCS Self-Study prepared by the CCRC provided the essential orientation for our program review, offering a systematic portrait of the Marquette Common Core with an eye toward its history, current makeup, and future potential. The document discussed the structure of the UCCS and its challenges, centering on three strategic foci: assessment, integration, and revision. It also called for input on the “meta-process” that could be used to review and revise the current UCCS.
In the spirit of a data-driven approach, valuable, clear information was provided on student pathways through the UCCS, constituents’ views about the UCCS, and implementation of the UCCS. A timeline explained the development of the UCCS and its assessment until now. The UCCS was also compared to core curricula at other schools in the AJCU. The current UCCS consists of 150 courses across nine knowledge areas: Rhetoric (2 required courses), Mathematical Reasoning, Histories of Cultures and Societies, Individual and Social Behavior, Science and Nature, Literature/Performing Arts, Diverse Cultures, Human Nature and Ethics (2 required courses), and Theology (2 required courses). Four of the 12 course requirements are mandated for all students (ENGL 1001, PHIL 1001 and 2310, THEO 1001). The Self-Study provided useful data that showed how, despite the large number of courses offered, there is a well-worn path through most of the UCCS and non-tenure track faculty teaches 58% of UCCS courses.

The current process for maintaining, reviewing, and approving courses for the UCCS was also outlined in the Self-Study. The Director of UCCS oversees the Core and reports to the Vice Provost for Undergraduate Programs and Teaching. The CCRC is responsible for approving courses and assessing the UCCS. It reports to the University Board of Undergraduate Studies (UBUS); the UBUS, in turn, reports to the Academic Senate. The Assessment Committee is an independent body that supports the Director of Assessment. All of the schools are represented in the three committees within the current administrative structure, which is a significant strength. The present system, however, does not lend itself to change and adaption or encourage experimentation.

The three strategic issues identified by Self-Study—assessment, integration, and revision—are selectively summarized below.

Assessment

Since its creation in 2003 much of the UCCS’s “current form was dictated by reaccreditation pressures.” Higher Learning Commission reaccreditation reports between 2004 and 2014 noted progress on the specific question of assessment. Two complementary sets of learning outcomes were put in place in 2005–2007: Knowledge Area Learning Outcomes (KALO) and Integrated Core Learning Outcomes (ICLO). Subsequently, corresponding assessment plans were created: the four-year KALO assessment cycle (2011–2015) and annual ICLO assessments in senior experience and capstone courses (2012–2014). Implementation of these plans, however, will be a challenge. The Self-Study called for feedback on the development a “comprehensive, rigorous, sustainable, and actionable” assessment plan for the UCCS. While comprehensive, the current assessment plan poses logistical difficulties, is labor intensive, and “has not yet yielded significant actionable results.” Multiple levels of learning goals, ambiguous learning outcomes, the absence of clear curriculum maps that show links between the learning outcomes and coursework, and the large number of mostly disconnected courses that fulfill nine knowledge areas are factors that further complicated assessment.

Integration


Since the formulation of the ICLO in 2006–2007, integration of UCCS courses has been a topic of concern and is now a “priority” for the CCRC. Enrollment patterns do show that undergraduates may have a higher degree of “common experience” than suggested by the large list of approved courses (they tend to take a small number or class). Still, there is little sequencing among those classes and thus considerable variation in the experiences of students who often fulfill their requirements piecemeal. That is, there is an unplanned common core experience. In addition, the model assumes that the students are able to integrate their experiences on their own. Although the flexibility of the current UCCS can be considered a strength, greater intentional connections among UCCS courses are needed in order to promote knowledge transfer and depth. Integration might involve, among other possibilities, interdisciplinary courses, creating links among course clusters or sequences or between the Core and the major, and aligning UCCS and institutional learning outcomes. The CCRC has considered a number of models for vertical and horizontal integration. Future efforts toward interconnection should be attentive to the distinctiveness of Marquette (existing enrollment patterns, co-curricular and service activities, the needs of professional schools, etc.).

Revision

As the previous summaries suggest, specific issues of assessment and integration are themselves subsidiary to the major strategic question of the UCCS as a whole. The Self-Study calls for “an evaluation of the revision process for the UCCS itself” and requests that the Provost and/or President “provide a specific written charge and timeline” for a thorough-going meta-evaluation of the UCCS that is “fair, transparent, and broadly consultative.” It is on this point that the present “moment of opportunity” in which to develop “a more coherent UCCS” emerges most clearly. Such a review could address the fact that “consistent majorities of faculty and students would like to see minor revisions to the UCCS” and that “members of the CCRC do not believe that the UCCS currently achieves its full potential to provide a distinctive education among peer and aspirational institutions.” A systematic review of the Marquette Core of Common Studies could build on the CCRC’s assessment of the UCCS in the Self-Study and engage Core programs at other Jesuit colleges and universities.

On-Campus Visit Summary

During our visit, we saw the UCCS through the eye of multiple stakeholders. Everyone with whom we spoke is truly committed to student learning and the Marquette mission. So much so, that they were willing to be brutally honest about past and present problems and challenges. There was broad consensus that respected, connected leaders are needed to bring Marquette’s UCCS into the future. In this respect, the arrival of President Lovell, as well as the imminent selection of a new Provost, are fortuitous. It is clear that people believe that a new, better integrated, and fully supported UCCS is possible and that everyone is willing to work for it. You are proud of your school and you want to be proud of the UCCS. You want a UCCS that meets your high expectations.
We realize that our knowledge is limited because we could not possibly meet with all stakeholders and constituencies at the university, but the overlap in perspectives was striking. We are confident that the following observations are in line with views held by a significant percentage of Marquette community members:

- The UCCS presently misses its mark by a significant margin. We do not know this based on data. We do know, based on conversations with faculty and administrators, that the previous Core revision was the result of a compromise influenced by external pressures and a negative internal climate. Bargaining was necessary to move forward but led to a UCCS that greatly differs from everyone’s vision of a core experience.

- Very little is known about what works and what does not work in the current Core. People have opinions based on their experiences and the experiences of the people they know or talk with about the Core. Some members of the community asked us if Marquette should scrap the UCCS entirely or if the current one should be modified. The most honest answer we can give is “we do not know” because there is very little data to tell us if and how the UCCS is working for students. (We strongly suspect that much of the current Core does work, just not always intentionally.)

- The UCCS experience is inconsistent and, therefore, not contributing to a “Marquette experience” or brand. We are basing this observation on data about who is teaching the UCCS (not your more experienced faculty) and meetings with students who take the Core and the faculty who teach in it. More information is needed about where the inconsistencies are. The main point is that people do not really know what the UCCS is and that this lack of identity may have unintentionally created a lack of commitment in implementing it.

- People believe that the UCCS lacks integration. We do know that integration across the nine areas is not built into the Core structure. The model assumes that students are integrating their learning on their own. Our meeting with the students suggested that at least some students are integrating and that at least some faculty are providing integrating experiences. The problem is that these wonderful learning experiences described by them may be happy accidents. As discussed in the Self-Study, creating opportunities for students to integrate is a best practice that leads to better student learning and long-term intellectual and personal development.

- There is a tension between flexibility and integration. The survey data suggested that most community members like the current UCCS and want little change. In contrast, the information we gathered during our campus meetings suggested that most community members are unhappy with the UCCS and want change, and some want substantial change soon. All methods of data collection have their weaknesses, and we are aware of the limits of both survey and interview data. We suspect that both of these conclusions—satisfaction and dissatisfaction—may be true. People want to keep what works and change what does not. The flexibility of the UCCS is a real strength for the professional schools because their academic programs are under tremendous pressure to conform to increasingly difficult standards. To paraphrase one member of the community discussing
changing accreditation standards: “They keep asking for more and they never take anything away.” Any revision must respect this reality for the professional schools. However, everyone we talked to thought that the UCCS needed to be better integrated. No one is happy with students checking off boxes to get through their core experience.

- Significant turnover in university leadership has impeded change in the UCCS. Changing the UCCS would impact the entire University. The enormity of the task requires stable leadership on multiple levels. It is not surprising to us that the UCCS as been on “autopilot” for over a decade. With a new President committed to Jesuit education and academic excellence (expressed in his call for Marquette to be Ignited in faith, Alive in inquiry, Forward in service), a new Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences, and robust structures of faculty governance—Marquette is ready to take on the important task. The hiring of a new Provost further reinforces the sense that the moment is right for a thoroughgoing examination and fresh “reboot” of the UCCS. As we discuss below, the review and assessment process that must precede any plans for restructuring could proceed now.

- People fear the change process. Some of the concern stems from the memory of the acrimony surrounding the previous revision process. No one wants to go through it again. People also understand that Marquette has structural challenges that prevent fast change and adaptability. Revising the UCCS will require a new approach to decision-making. We discuss creating a steering committee that has a clear directive and the resources it needs to navigate change.

- People also fear stagnation. Administrators made it clear to us that they want the UCCS review and revision process to be faculty-driven. The faculty made it clear to us that they did not want to embark on changing the UCCS without a clear directive, support, and continuous input from university leadership. If faculty receive the signal that their efforts will not be taken seriously, the process will stop and the failure to change the UCCS will be demoralizing.

**Recommendations**

We summarize below specific recommendations for assessment, integration, and revision of the UCCS. We end with our main recommendation regarding the meta-process: we believe that creating a steering committee will enable the UCCS to change in meaningful ways within the distinctive structure and culture of Marquette.

**Assessment: Balancing Vision with Data-Driven Decision-Making**

The inability to assess a core in a sustainable, actionable way is a sign that a core lacks clear goals and integration. These problems could be due to way the UCCS was created, to Marquette’s institutional structure, to curricular drift over time, or to all of the above. The reason why assessment has not been successful may not matter. We completely agree with the Self-
Study that a comprehensive plan with credible, actionable data needs to be in place going forward. Accreditors are now demanding such data. Marquette does not have to wait for the new UCCS to be in place to begin collecting data. We recommend that the CCRC collect data on the state of the current UCCS with assistance from the University Assessment Committee. Their assessment plan needs to be strategic and ask questions that can serve the potential revision process. While Marquette’s mission, vision, and values need to provide the foundation for the new UCCS, the revision process needs to be data-driven, too. The steering committee we recommend below will need to continue to gather information about alternative core structures, taking the Self-Study as a launching point and using it to propose and test the appropriateness and feasibility of different core models. For instance, data from the AJCU schools shows that 50% of the schools either include foreign language component their core or require a certain level of proficiency for graduation, including Boston College (http://www.bc.edu/schools/cas/communication/ undergrad/core.html) and the University of San Francisco (http://www.usfca.edu/catalog/ core/language/). Other AJCU schools require foreign language work for only honors students (e.g., Loyola Marymount University) and some let the requirement differ by major (e.g., Loyola University New Orleans). Thus, requiring foreign language coursework is common, but not universal in the Jesuit schools. The data suggest that the requirement is common enough, however, to warrant serious discussion about its absence. The steering committee will need to make sure that discussions about alternative models as well as identity take place and, with the help of the other curricular committees, ensure that the voices of multiple stakeholders are heard.

In addition to our suggestions, the Self-Study includes two recommendations that we suggest adopting. First, that UCCS assessment be simplified and streamlined by focusing the KALO assessment on the 3–4 most commonly taken courses for each knowledge area. That is, assess the well-worn path in order to understand the Marquette student experience. Issues of consistency across courses can be undertaken after some work has been done on integration. Second, that ICLO assessment should rely on hired graduate student assessment raters. Graduate students (and even undergraduate honors students) can be trained to become reliable coders using clear rubrics. It would be good experience for students in education and the social sciences. Consider creating teaching or research assistantships in curriculum development. These assessment recommendations should be implemented by the CCRC in the short-term while the more global UCCS evaluation and revision process is underway.

Integration: Balancing Innovation with Complexity

The new UCCS will need to have integration built into its design. We recommend discussing ways to have the liberal arts and professional education experiences complement each other both within schools (in the case of the College of Arts and Sciences) and across schools. We could see a model with foundational elements (that could be transferred) and integrative elements that pull the Core up through the major to reinforce and build on important knowledge and skills learned earlier. This idea is simply one possibility, of course. Your faculty will create the best model based on the Marquette vision, structure, and student learning goals. We strongly suggest that Marquette resist the urge to create an innovative core that is too complex. Santa Clara University’s Core is an excellent example of a curriculum that moves students from the basics to
integrative learning experiences throughout their undergraduate career. The curriculum, however, has 3 levels, 18 components, and 59 learning outcomes. Given Marquette’s structure with many schools, Santa Clara University’s Core, as a whole, may not be the best model. There are, however, some elements of that Core which Marquette may find useful, such as using courses in the majors and asking faculty to submit proposals for integrative courses. Assessment data could be collected to see where students are experiencing integration within the UCCS and between UCCS and their majors in order to identify already existing courses and to expand on them. We also suggest that you build in the ability to experiment. Allow faculty to propose “exploratory courses” that are designed to be taught for a semester or two. The courses would be similar to a “core special topics” course.

In addition to our suggestions, the Self-Study includes two recommendations that we suggest adopting on a provisional basis until a more substantially robust revision process can be completed. Specifically, integration in the UCCS could be pursued in the following concrete ways. First, units charged with required courses (ENGL 1001, PHIL 1001, PHIL 2310, and THEO 1001) should develop one unit in each course that provides students the opportunity to integrate knowledge and skills developed across them. Faculty could experiment with integrative pedagogy. Second, specific UCCS courses should integrate first-year reading into their syllabi.

*Revision: Balancing Administrative Leadership and Faculty Ownership—Balancing the Liberal Arts with Professional Education*

The Self-Study recommends that a “comprehensive evaluation and revision process” be created for the UCCS as a whole. This evaluation and process should begin with a specific written charge from the President and/or Provost and “indicate overall priorities, responsible parties, and timeline for completion.” Faculty should be primarily responsible for the review and outcomes, and “the final recommendations should be submitted to the University Academic Senate for approval.”

The assessment and integration work will form a key part of the revision process. We highly recommend that the process start with creating learning outcomes that reflect the Marquette community’s common vision of the knowledge that all students should be able to show having completed the only coursework they have in common. The outcomes will not reflect all that the students know. Instead, the manageable (perhaps, short) list of learning outcomes for the UCCS should state the measurable, visible, objective beliefs and behaviors that will convince the faculty, students, parents, and other stakeholders that the UCCS is working. The learning outcomes should not be aspiration. Instead, inspiration about the Marquette undergraduate education can be found in the Mission and other statements about goals and values. Once the future learning outcomes are created, then curriculum maps can be created using the new outcomes and the courses in the current UCCS to locate places where the core experiences is working now and build from those places. Exploration of models of Core course integration should be done, building on information in the Self-Study. While we appreciate the desire to completely start from scratch, moving to a completely new core could be very hard on everyone. We recommend locating existing strengths and investigating models of incremental change.
Meta-Process: Creating A New Decision-Making Process

As external reviewers, we would like to underscore the importance of the comprehensive evaluation and revision process. The two issues of integration and assessment are in some sense subordinate to the more general need for a meta-process through which the UCCS as a whole is evaluated and possibly redesigned.

We thus strongly encourage the President and/or Provost to provide the indispensable visionary leadership and mandate that will direct and empower the Marquette faculty to engage a specific process that asks and answers the questions:

- How does the UCCS represent the vision, goals, and mission of the university?
- What is the role of the UCCS in a Marquette education?
- How should the UCCS change? That is, does the UCCS need to change? If so, how?

The administration should provide the vision, and faculty should generate the plan. Given the distinctive history of the creation of the UCCS and the experience of it over the past decade, it is crucial that a “fair, transparent, and broadly consultative process” be intentionally undertaken. There are many constituencies, structural constraints, and unique possibilities for Core education at Marquette. The revision meta-process itself should move forward in a way that promotes participation, engagement, and communication, and that deliberately addresses the distinctive needs of schools and departments and of Marquette students. The frankness with which many faculty and administrators described previous tensions around the UCCS is itself a sign that it is an opportune moment to turn the page and intentionally develop a Core program that realistically meets Marquette’s distinctive institutional needs. A workable, meaningful Core renewal should anchor aspirational visions in a practicable plan.

We recommend that the most useful mechanism in the comprehensive evaluation and revision process is a small steering committee that complements existing faculty governance structures (the CCRC, UBUS, and Academic Senate). While the precise makeup and charge of such a steering committee should be determined by the President and/or Provost, we would suggest a number of elements:

- The steering committee should be small (4–5 members) to allow the group to work quickly and efficiently.
- The committee does not have to include representation from all schools because such representation exists on the CCRC, UBUS, and Academic Senate. There should be members, however, who can effectively represent both professional schools and the Arts and Sciences.
- Faculty who arrived at Marquette since the creation of the UCCS in 2003 might play a key role in the reevaluation and potential revision of Core education. Unconnected to the
dynamics of that foundational moment, they can bring fresh perspectives and new energy to the process. For instance, many academics trained during the past decade frequently think in interdisciplinary terms and thus might contribute to imaginatively addressing the issue of Core integration. At the same time, junior faculty in particular need to be protected from weighty and complex university service. A balance should be maintained between, on one hand, proactively involving junior and recently tenured faculty, who will be stewards of the curriculum in the future, and on the other hand, not burdening them with undue responsibilities. Their views and input could be especially useful in envisioning experimental possibilities for twenty-first century Core education.

- Committee members should be provided the resources to dedicate substantial time and energy to the evaluation and revision process.
- Substantive assessment of how the UCCS works now and planning for how it might be improved might take up to two years; hence it is important that during this time the CCRC continue to assess and experiment with integration as outlined above.

The steering committee’s small size and explicit mandate from Marquette leadership should make it an effective working group. Its major purpose will be to make systematic recommendations to the Provost and the Faculty Senate. The following are issues to be considered with respect to the comprehensive evaluation and revision process:

- It is crucial that any Core renewal process begin with schools, departments, and programs explicitly identifying how they contribute and fit into Core education as well the concerns they have about the present and any future Core structure. Schools, departments, and programs should communicate their needs and perceptions at the outset; the steering committee should serve as the hub of this survey, and town hall meetings could further facilitate transparency, notably between professional schools and Arts and Sciences. Only openness and communication can make a university more than the sum of its parts. Since discussion of the Core cannot be divided from discussions of Marquette’s identity as a whole, it is worth taking the time to understand and assess your existing strengths and weaknesses en route to articulating who you want to be.

It is of fundamental importance that faculty be invited to participate in Core renewal throughout the process and that they be informed of progress along the way. In addition to focus groups and meetings with committees, chairs, and departments, the steering committee might consider holding town hall meetings both to solicit input and to inform the Marquette community. Communication and transparency should be very high priorities for the steering committee, given the history of the UCCS. There is no reason why a meaningful, inclusive, and healthy process cannot generate a Core program that is satisfying to many faculty and valuable to all Marquette students.

- Employers and alumni are key constituencies who have roles to play in any reconsideration of the Marquette Core. Employers have clear criteria for the basic skills and personal qualities they require of graduates entering the job market. The foundations of such skills and qualities are laid in a Core program, the one common academic
experience all Marquette students share. Similarly, the strong community of Marquette alumni, especially in the Milwaukee area, should be engaged in conversations about the Core, since many of the aspirational goals of a Jesuit education are realized only years after students graduate. Marquette faculty and administrators should more clearly explain and actively promote the distinctive value of the UCCS to employers and alumni.

Marquette is unique among Jesuit schools and universities for the number of its well-regarded professional schools. As a Jesuit university, Marquette is also unique among peer and aspirant schools in the region. This distinctive profile can be the source of tremendous opportunity; what might be considered a point of tension is actually a resource for unique value. Arts and Sciences faculty can play a pivotal role in providing foundational humanistic, religious, social scientific, and natural scientific education for students who pursue professional degrees; professional schools can claim that Core education sets them apart from their peers because Marquette students integrate specialized competencies with skills and ways of thinking promoted by Arts and Sciences. We strongly encourage Marquette to consider the benefits of creating a strong link between these two strengths—liberal arts and professional education—and to make this link part of its institutional identity. A series of symposia focusing on successful collaborations could be created to showcase current successes, and town hall meetings could serve as contexts for discussions about places where the two educational traditions could intersect in the future. These activities could be coordinated by administration and/or the Academic Senate and occur in parallel to the work on the UCCS. At the heart of these conversations is the development of the whole person—a principal aim of a Jesuit education.

- A carefully and intentionally designed Core might better serve Marquette students and address ongoing dissatisfactions among faculty and administrators. This is not to say that an entirely new Core needs to be built from scratch; indeed, there are parts of the existing UCCS that may work well. The steering committee should determine through strategically meaningful assessment what works well about the existing UCCS. It should then gradually develop a plan that might retain positive aspects of the current UCCS while moving in new directions. There is thus a need to consider partial versus complete reform.

- Any Core revision will need to account for existing curricular requirements in schools and departments. Some of the necessary flexibility in the UCCS, as well as the clearly articulated need for greater integration, stems from this institutional reality. The point is not necessarily to make the Core larger, but to structure, support, teach, integrate, and assess it better. The question of integration touches on a range of factors: requirements, sequencing, interdisciplinarity, team-teaching, and so forth. Given Marquette’s uniquely complex institutional profile, flexibility will likely remain a necessary virtue.

- A revised UCCS will have to move forward in light of contemporary fiscal realities. The budget constraints of a tuition-driven university will need to be balanced against that fact that, if the Core rests at the heart of the Marquette undergraduate education, it should
become a resource priority. Involving more tenure-track and tenured faculty in the Core may require faculty development resources and incentives.

- There has been considerable dialog at the national level about importance of a liberal arts education in today’s world. University leaders have discussed the value of a liberal arts education (e.g., see Roth’s 2014 book Beyond the University: Why Liberal Education Matters) and research has begun to show the economic advantages of the educational approach (e.g., https://www.aacu.org/leap/presidentstrust/compact/2013SurveySummary). Marquette can take advantage of the current work on best practices in liberal arts education. The AAC&U’s Liberal Education & America’s Promise (LEAP) initiative has generated a number of documents outlining recommendations for student learning in the “new global century,” including a 21st-century definition of a liberal arts education, essential learning outcomes for general education, and high impact practices (https://www.aacu.org/leap).

The Marquette UCCS faces a complex set of overlapping rationales and objectives: the traditions of Jesuit education, the university mission statement and strategic planning themes, unique UCCS goals and strategic priorities, and Knowledge Area and Integrated Core Learning Outcomes. Marquette’s similarities to and differences from other peer and aspirant schools, notably other Jesuit colleges and universities, also need to be considered. This complexity may interfere with developing streamlined, integrated, and assessable undergraduate programming.

Further topics to examine include: shifts in the educational landscape, decrease in the total number of credits toward graduation, new student demographics, increased transfer credits, high-impact student learning experiences (research, internships, service learning, etc.), and UCCS resource deficiencies (no specifically designated faculty, dedicated budget, or research and faculty development support). These questions need to be addressed bearing in mind a number of structural conditions: labor-intensive program management; existing administrative frameworks; the curricular requirements of different colleges and departments; prevailing patterns of student enrollment; employer needs, alumni expectations, and funding restraints.

The following are questions the steering committee might consider as it assesses the present-day UCCS and considers revisions:

- How does the UCCS exemplify a Jesuit education in the twenty-first century?
- What is the model of the Marquette student that the UCCS aspires to form?
- How can the Marquette UCCS help students balance their liberal arts and professional educations? Can the Marquette UCCS serve as a national model for the balance between well-rounded personhood and professional excellence?
- Are there aspects of Core programs at other Jesuit Colleges and Universities that might serve as useful models for Marquette?
• How is the UCCS different from general education requirements at other, non-Jesuit schools?

• How might the various layers of university and UCCS principles, as well as UCCS learning outcomes, be simplified and made more measurable?

• What “comprehensive, rigorous, sustainable, and actionable” assessment processes can be put in place?

• How can the UCCS achieve greater integration?

• How could the CCRC be modified to make it more effective with respect to on-going program maintenance, assessment, faculty time, and so forth?

• How could the revision process make room for experimentation with innovative pedagogies?

• How might changes to the College Arts and Sciences Core requirements be an opportunity for the Arts and Sciences to play a more effective role in the UCCS?

• How could the UCCS be better explained to Marquette faculty and students?

• How could the UCCS play a greater role in promoting Marquette to prospective students and their parents as well as to alumni?

• Who should teach UCCS classes? Why? Are there ways to make it more attractive for tenure-track and tenured faculty to teach the Core?

• How will transfer students fit into the UCCS?

• What role might Marquette’s robust ethos of service play in the UCCS?

• What role might co-curricular activities and programs play in the UCCS?

• Could the Marquette University Honors Program help provide a model for UCCS integration? Are there other models?

• Should there be curricular changes (foreign language, informational and visual competency, scientific literacy, etc.)?

**Conclusion**

Marquette University is not alone among Jesuit colleges and universities in reflecting on Core education in the early twenty-first century. Many peers are engaged in on-going conversations about the meaning of Jesuit education. Marquette, however, seems uniquely placed both to
undertake such dialogues with intentional care and to be a leader in redefining what the living traditions of Ignatian pedagogy mean for students and faculty today. You have already accumulated substantial experience with the UCCS over the past decade, whereas most other schools have only recently revised or begun to revise their Core programs. You are momentarily free from external accreditation pressures, and the CCRC has already undertaken valuable fundamental reflection in the UCCS Self-Study. Many new faculty have come to Marquette since the UCCS was created, bringing new energy and possibilities. Above all, the arrival of President Lovell and a new Provost mark the beginning of a new chapter in the university’s history. Visionary leadership can inspire and empower the faculty to engage in a process of evaluation and possible redesign of Core education. The faculty should work in good faith to create a model of Core education that satisfies Marquette’s unique institutional needs and that provides a foundational, formative experience for Marquette students.