Minutes – Foundations Task Force
Monday, Oct. 17th 1pm to 2pm

Task force members present: Sarah Wadsworth, Jenn Fishman, Theresa Tobin, Deirdre Dempsey, Laura Matthew, Bob Masson, Sarah Feldner, Lars Olson, Steve Goldzwig

1. Update on core process.
2. Consideration of “Hybrid” Model
   a. Model will include 3 courses: Philosophy, Theology, and Rhetoric (each 3 credit)
   b. 4th class would be an interdisciplinary seminar:
      i. 3 instructors in a large lecture; (2 lectures a week) each teaching 4 weeks and then rotating
      ii. Students would attend a smaller discussion section weekly
   c. Questions to be asked of this model
      i. Should TAs rotate with instructors or should they remain the same
      ii. Will there be classroom space to accommodate enough sections
      iii. Coordinator will be needed for consistency
      iv. Which disciplines should be included? How determined?
      v. How much depth in disciplinary knowledge is needed?
   d. Concerns with this model
      i. Consistency of experience for students
      ii. Question raised if graduate TAs would have the necessary skill to manage this type of discussion; related is the question of needed disciplinary breadth
      iii. Feedback suggests that more core courses should be taught be full time faculty – this seems to rely more on teaching assistants
      iv. This does not provide for the smaller first year smaller section as noted by many faculty in listening session
3. Alternate model for a Last/First Lecture/Inquiry Seminar
   a. One 75 minute lecture and one 75 minute discussion per week for students
   b. 25 faculty needed to teach 2 sections of 20 students each in this model – this would count for 1 course in load
   c. Lectures would be 8 to 10 faculty from across disciplines. Would have to be something like TED talks which would not require the physical presence of all students at the lecture
   d. Questions and concerns with model
      i. A more superficial approach to topics with one lecture per topic
      ii. Does allow for more disciplinary exposure
      iii. Includes faculty development need to manage the discussion
      iv. How would we compensate lectures
      v. Could be combined with the discovery assignment approach presented in the last meeting
vi. Guarantees a true discussion seminar with a full time member of faculty a student’s first or second year at MU.

4. With either model - integrated course needs to help students make explicit links and connections between disciplines

5. Discussion of the Theo, Phil, Rhetoric classes
   a. Should these be the 3 classes that we will include?
      i. Other departments have asked about how list was developed.
      ii. Most students have had basic exposure to scientific and quantitative reasoning whereas they have not had as much exposure with theology and philosophy
      iii. Concluded that these are the right courses for the foundations; other disciplines participate as a part of faculty who teach the integrating seminar (in either format)
   b. How will courses be tied together. General themes ideas discussed include:
      i. What is nature of knowledge and pursuit of knowledge
      ii. What are basic methodologies of discipline?
      iii. How are ethics defined/approached from this perspective?
      iv. How are questions asked from this perspective?
      v. What are vocabularies that define the discipline?
      vi. How does discipline see the world?

6. Shared feedback from the Physics Department
   a. Department approached Sarah Feldner (in capacity of director) and requested a meeting
   b. Department faculty expressed strong concerns about lack of department’s inclusion in the foundational tier.
      i. Faculty felt scientific inquiry was one of 3 essential elements to Jesuit education (philosophy, theology, science)
      ii. Asked foundations task force to consider its conclusion
   c. Faculty had ideas that seemed well-suited for themes (for example a consideration of renewable energy). While it was suggested that this included the discovery tier some Physics faculty felt that this was insufficient
   d. Task force heard feedback and felt that the second tier is a good place for these types of contributions and would consider ways in which the proposed integrative course might also include scientific reasoning as a component.