Recommendations for Undergraduate Core of Common Studies Program Review
Submitted by the Program Review Council
January, 2015

Background
First and foremost, the Program Review Council wishes to thank Dr. John Su, the Core Director, the core committee members and Dr. Gary Meyer for their work in preparing a very comprehensive set of materials for the review. The purpose of the program review was to serve as a precursor to the final decision regarding if and when a formal revision of the University Core of Common Studies (UCCS) would take place. As a decision regarding the next core director is planned to take place in February 2015, the results of this process and the council recommendations will be available to the next Director of UCCS.

The external review took place on October 8-10, 2014 and the review team leader was Dr. Julian Bourg of Boston College and his colleague on the team was Dr. Shirley McGuire from University of San Francisco. The reviewers met with the Program Review Council on October 10th. Dr. Su and Dr. Gary Meyer met with the Program Review Council on December 3, 2014.

Strategic Issues
1. Assessment: developing a plan that is comprehensive, rigorous, sustainable, and actionable
2. Integration: developing more intentional connections among courses that constitute the UCCS and between the UCCS and coursework taken to fulfill a disciplinary major
3. Revision: developing a process for potentially revising the UCCS in light of enrollment data, input from key stakeholders, trends in higher education, and recommendations of the program review committee

Reviewer Recommendations
1. Assessment: Balancing Vision with Data-Driven Decision-Making
   - 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 UCCS assessment should 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.
• Create a small steering committee to lead this effort. The steering committee’s small size and explicit mandate from Marquette leadership should make it an effective working group.

2. Integration: Balancing Innovation with Complexity
• 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.
• We strongly suggest that Marquette resist the urge to create an innovative core that is too complex.

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.

3. 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.”
• 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.
• We recommend locating existing strengths and investigating models of incremental change.

Program Review Council Recommendations
1. As a leadership team, the President and Provost should establish the foundation and a set of principles for the core revision process based on the Marquette mission, vision and values and communicate this to the university community.
2. The core revision should be used as an opportunity to create a stronger connection between Marquette’s unique 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.

3. With respect to a timeline, the council recommends that assessment of the current core be ongoing and that the director and the committee continue to document what they learn from the current process and adapt it to the revision process. That is, the assessment process as currently designed should continue in its current format, but with an emphasis on what can be learned and eventually utilized in the revision of the core.

Commentary
The Program Review Council believes that the recommendations deemed appropriate by the Core Director and the Core Committee from the external reviewers should be used as a set of guidelines for the core revision process. It agrees with the reviewers that Marquette has a unique and distinct advantage with its strong liberal arts and professional programs and this should be leveraged to best serve its students, recruiters, and employers, engaging the alumni and the broader community. We also strongly recommend that the process include facilitated campus-wide discussions designed to establish a set of principles for core revision that meet the needs of all Marquette students. This is a very timely and unique opportunity to expand the dialogue among faculty and students regarding the essential goals of a Jesuit education and desirable and achievable learning outcomes.