Core Revision Process – Fall 2015

Core Revision Facilitation Group
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Core Revision Process – Fall 2015
Overview of September Survey Results

- Survey sent to faculty who taught undergraduates in the last year
- 259 completed surveys
- Mix of qualitative and quantitative questions
  - Quantitative answers are relatively straightforward
  - Qualitative responses all were read, coded and organized
Question 1: What should the characteristics be of a student who has completed the Core?

• 225 respondents answered Question 1.
• Characteristics mentioned included (top 10, in order):
  – Critical thinker
  – Better able to communicate
  – Comprehends and appreciates diversity
  – Committed to social justice; compassionate toward others
  – Globally aware
  – Well-rounded; strong foundation in the liberal arts
  – Reflective
  – A better citizen
  – Stronger in faith; spirituality
  – Ethical
Top Characteristics of a Post-Core Student

• **Critical thinker**
  – Mentioned by 66 respondents (29 %)
  – **Example:** “The ability to think critically about nearly any topic would be a great start. We, and universities in general, cram our students full of facts, using low level memorization, and seldom ask students to critically interrogate topics or ideas.”

• **Better able to communicate**
  – Mentioned by 52 respondents (23 %)
  – Included all aspects of communication and argumentation, not just writing
  – **Example:** “Core courses should provide students with a strong knowledge base in a variety of disciplines, and the skills necessary to think and argue rationally. After completing the core, a student should be able to apply these skills and draw upon this knowledge base to compose clearly organized oral and written arguments in response to complex social, economic, political, and ethical issues.”
Top Characteristics of a Post-Core Student

- **Comprehends and appreciates diversity**
  - Mentioned by 47 respondents (21 %)
  - Mostly focused on identity and cultural diversity
  - **Example:** “Appreciate and embrace diversity on and off campus. Act with respect in dress, language, and actions to all individuals a student comes in contact with on or off campus. Utilize the education they receive at Marquette to enhance and develop their ability to accept and interact with other diverse cultures.”

- **Committed to social justice; compassionate toward others**
  - Mentioned by 46 respondents (20 %)
  - **Example:** “Students should have the analytical dexterity and historical knowledge to critique and change (or create) institutions towards greater social justice.”
Top Characteristics of a Post-Core Student

• **Globally aware**
  – Mentioned by 41 respondents (18 %)
  – 13 additional mentions of foreign language proficiency
  – **Example**: “Participate in solving the global crises facing humans. Empathize with all members of the global human family.”

• **Well-rounded; strong foundation in the liberal arts**
  – Mentioned by 41 respondents (18 %)
  – **Example**: “1. Critical thinking and evaluation of issues that are beyond the student’s direct area of study. 2. Basic knowledge of a wide breadth of areas: arts, humanities, sciences. 3. Problem solving capacity. 4. In the end, we want Marquette graduates to be well-balanced, educated, and thoughtful individuals.”
Top Characteristics of a Post-Core Student

• Others top responses:
  – Reflective (30 responses, 13 %)
  – A good citizen (30 responses, 13 %)
  – Stronger in faith; spirituality (29 responses, 13 %)
  – Ethical (28 responses, 12 %)
  – Integrative; makes connections (25 responses, 11 %)
  – Community-focused (16 responses, 7 %)
  – Curiosity; love of learning (14 responses, 6 %)
  – Creative (13 responses, 6 %)
  – Competent in a foreign language (13 responses, 6 %)
  – Experiential; action-oriented (11 responses, 5 %)
Themes from Question 1

- Core should develop “thinking” skills rather than knowledge skills: Critical thinkers, reflective, integrative, etc.
- Students must develop the ability to communicate ideas
- Core should help students put the principle of social justice into action, developing compassion and generosity toward others
- Students should get a broad liberal arts-focused foundation
- Core should emphasize diversity and foster global awareness
- Students should connect to their community and developing into good, and ethical, citizens
- Core playing a role in enhancing students’ faith and spirituality
Question 2: How should the Core be distinctive, reflecting our Catholic, Jesuit heritage and mission?

- 215 respondents answered Question 2.
- Ideas mentioned fell into three tiers (most mentioned to least):
  - Tier 1: Social justice; Jesuit tradition/pedagogy; service-focused/service learning
  - Tier 2: Theology; philosophy; ethics-focused; the mission’s “pillars”; integrated; liberal arts; diversity/tolerance; faith-focused; foreign language; reflective/thoughtful
  - Tier 3: Global; experiential; critical thinking; instructional quality; inquiry-focused; leadership; capstone; first-year experience; career-focused
- Many respondents questioned the need to be “distinctive,” especially in comparison to other Jesuit universities
Top Characteristics of a Distinctive Core, Reflecting the University’s Mission

• **Social Justice**
  – Mentioned by 47 respondents (22 %)
  – *Example*: “For me the mission of Marquette is closely tied to interventions into the larger public world in the name of social justice. I think the core should reflect this vision of ‘going forth and setting the world on fire’.”

• **Jesuit Tradition/Pedagogy**
  – Mentioned by 40 respondents (19 %)
  – Included the idea that students should know more about Jesuit history and teachings, as well as have an understanding of – and experience – Jesuit pedagogy (including the Ignatian pedagogical paradigm (IPP)/*Ratio Studiorum*).
  – *Example*: “If we don’t have a core that speaks to our Jesuit identity, then what would be the point? Otherwise professional standards would be sufficient. Presumably Jesuit means pedagogy as well as content.”
Top Characteristics of a Distinctive Core, Reflecting the University’s Mission

• **Service-focused/service learning**
  – Mentioned by 38 respondents (18 %)
  – **Examples**: “A focus on outreach in the community and helping others, study abroad, and a service component for EVERY MU graduate.”
    “Some amount of service learning should be included in core courses. Other than that, I see no need to push for distinctiveness.”

• **These top three ranged from 38-47 mentions.**
  – The highest number of mentions in the next tier were 22 (Theology)
  – There were 18 mentions of both “philosophy” and “ethics-focused”
Do We Need a Distinctive Core?

• **A number of respondents questioned the need to be distinctive.**
  – Most true when thinking about distinctive versus fellow Jesuit universities
  – **Examples:** “We should be more different from public institutions than from other Jesuit institutions because we are part of the Jesuit ‘family’.”
    “Obviously reflect, and make central, the Jesuit Catholic tradition and mission in the core. If we work on doing what we do really well, distinctiveness will take care of itself. We obsess too much on being ‘distinctive’ at MU.”

• **Others were even more pointed:**
  – “I don’t know that we can make it distinctive from other Jesuit schools without promising the impossible or being ridiculous. What, honestly, can we do that other Jesuit universities can’t or don’t already? I have no answer to that.”
Do We Need a Distinctive Core?

- **Several respondents gave a possible answer: Emphasize connections to our local community.**
  - “If Marquette’s mission were to be distinctive, I can see that it should give special attention to our own neighborhood, city, and state.”
  - “Emphasis on MKE—culture, ethnicity, arts, sports, strengths and weaknesses. Location makes us unique to all other schools (except UWM), so let’s focus on that uniqueness.”

- **Others stressed taking the Jesuit focus to another level:**
  - “Ideally, more than one class would touch on Jesuit tradition, and it wouldn’t all be in Theology classes. Maybe in the Rhetoric/Comp cycle they might read something from the spiritual exercises, along with necessary background?”
  - “Perhaps incorporate what it means to be Jesuit at freshmen orientation with examples of actions students can take while on campus. You could consider “Jesuit Philosophy’ as a replacement [for] one of the current Theology or Philosophy requirements.”
Question 3

• **Focused on options for integration.**
  – Past surveys and listening sessions pointed to the components of the Core being too disconnected from each other.
  – Question 3 asked respondents to strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree, or strongly disagree with a number of ideas people had proposed for ways to make the core more integrative:
    • Sequencing in Same Discipline
    • Sequencing in Different Disciplines
    • Sequencing across the Core
    • Coordination of Concurrent Courses
    • Connecting Core Courses to Major
    • Grouping Courses around Themes
    • Gateway Course or First-Year Experience
    • Core Capstone Course
    • Connecting Core to Outside-the-Classroom Events
Question 3: Options for Integration
3A: Sequencing in Same Discipline

**Question 3A)**
Sequencing (i.e., requiring that certain Core courses are taken in a particular order) of two or more courses in the same discipline

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Question 3: Options for Integration

3B: Sequencing in Different Disciplines

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Question 3: Options for Integration

3C: Sequencing across the Core

**Question 3C**
Sequencing the entire Core holistically, from first-year experience to Core capstone

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Question 3: Options for Integration
3D: Coordination of Concurrent Courses

Question 3D)
The coordination of content in two or more courses taken at the same time.

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Question 3: Options for Integration
3E: Connecting Core Courses to Major

Question 3E)
Connecting Core courses more intentionally to courses in a student's major

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Total answered: 257
Question 3: Options for Integration

3F: Grouping Courses around Themes

Question 3F)
Grouping a set of required courses around a particular theme

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Question 3: Options for Integration

3G: Gateway Course or First-Year Experience

**Question 3G**
A required “gateway” course or other common first-year experience as part of the Core

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**Total answered:** 257
Question 3: Options for Integration

3H: Core Capstone Course

Question 3H)
A Core capstone course

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Question 3: Options for Integration
3H: Connecting Core to Outside-the-Classroom Events

Question 3b)
Connecting Core courses to on-campus, outside-the-classroom events

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Total answered: 257
Question 3: Options for Integration

Summary of Responses to Question 3

• General support for all types of integration in the Core
• Strong support for connecting Core courses to outside-the-classroom activities and to the student’s major
• Also strong support for “gateway” course/first-year experience
• Solid support for capstone course, but also some of the strongest opposition
• Solid support as well for integrating around themes, although supporters were more likely to somewhat agree than strongly agree
Question 4: Additional Integration Ideas
Respondents asked to list other ideas beyond those in Question 3

- 171 respondents offered comments
- Many questioned the need for greater integration
  - Example: “I don’t see a need to increase integration in the Core. I fear this will take valuable time and energy that would be better spent furthering the excellence of the courses we already have.”
- Among those who did make suggestions, there was a large number of different suggestions
  - This is to be expected given the nature of Question 4
  - Since it was adding to those ideas already presented in Question 3, having more varied responses with less support each is not surprising
Question 4: Additional Integration Ideas

- Still, a few ideas received multiple mentions
- The most frequently mentioned ideas included:
  - Greater faculty interaction/coordination/training
  - Link Core courses to college or major requirements
  - Interdisciplinary courses/requirements
  - Experiential learning
  - Thematic organization of courses
  - Team-taught courses
  - Sequential courses
  - Focus on Jesuit tradition
  - Service-focused requirements
  - First-year experience
  - Fewer options per component of the Core
Top Mentions for Additional Integration Ideas

- **Greater faculty interaction/coordination/training**
  - Mentioned by 20 respondents (12 %)
  - **Examples:** “Communication between the departments and faculty teaching Core courses. Perhaps annual or biannual gatherings to discuss challenges and teaching. The Core should include our best and brightest instructors, be our most vibrant classroom experiences, and be the heart of what Marquette is.”
  
  “More education of advisors and faculty on the intentions of the Core.”
  “Allocate resources to collaboration of faculty teaching Core courses: to help them coordinate with other faculty in terms of the content of their respective courses or in terms of assignments or papers or in terms of common activities, or in terms of guest-lecturing in other courses.”
  “Connections between the different Core courses – conversations among instructors to see how each course fits into a larger whole.”
Top Mentions for Additional Integration Ideas

- **Link Core courses to college or major requirements**
  - Mentioned by 19 respondents (11 %)
  - Examples: “It would be great if core courses could be connected to majors. For example, with rhetoric, one might take an introductory course followed by a discipline specific course. Writing and presentations vary a lot between disciplines so that this would help their careers and also allow students to see the relevance of the core courses.”

“Trying to connect or integrate core courses requires greater offerings of courses that will be linked. For students in the sciences, it is extremely difficult to fit courses around their required science courses and laboratory sessions. Having offerings linked to certain professional careers (health sciences, nursing, etc.) would have a greater benefit and application for the students in these majors.”
Top Mentions for Additional Integration Ideas

- **Interdisciplinary courses/requirements**
  - Mentioned by 17 respondents (10 %)
  - **Examples**: “The prospect of interdisciplinary courses, team-taught and fully integrated, could be a nice way to add additional integration. This project would involve significant commitment from faculty in different disciplines, but it could be good for both student learning and faculty research.”

  “Cross disciplinary courses, increased interaction between various faculty teaching in the core.”

  “Include interdisciplinary seminars related to the Core.”

  “One way to keep the Core vibrant would be to introduce cross-disciplinary themes which could be highlighted in courses across different disciplines. The themes could be rotated periodically to provide fresh new perspectives, yet each cohort of students would have commonality.”
Question 5: How Many Themes?
Respondents asked how many themes if the Core were thematic

• 148 respondents answered Question 5
• Respondents were asked for their “optimum number” of themes
• Answered ranged from a maximum of 10 to a minimum of 0
• The mean of the answers was 3.87
If Thematic, Which Themes?
Respondents asked to suggest themes if the Core were thematic

• 165 respondents offered at least one comment
• 607 total comments
• A large number of different suggestions, but several ideas were mentioned more often than others
• Broadly, the suggestions fell into two categories:
  – Themes that were closely connected to the existing Knowledge Areas of the UCCS (e.g., Math and Natural Science; Rhetoric; Diversity)
  – Themes that were more difficult to connect to the existing KA’s (e.g., The Environment; Global Awareness; Social Justice)
If Thematic, Which Themes?
Respondents asked to suggest themes if the Core were thematic

• Some respondents questioned the benefits of a thematic approach
  – Others expressed concern that they did not understand the idea of themes
  – This is one possible explanation for the large number of themes that were essentially restatements of the existing UCCS Knowledge Areas
Top Mentions for Thematic Core Topics

• The most suggested themes were as follows (# of mentions among 607 total responses):

  – Math/Science/Technology (75)  – Human Nature, Existence, and Dignity (41)
  – Literature/Arts (61)  – Justice/Social Justice/Inequality (40)
  – Faith/Religion/Theology (55)  – Social Sciences (37)
  – Ethics/Citizenship (54)  – History (33)
  – Rhetoric/Writing/Argumentation (53)  – Philosophy (31)
  – Global Awareness/Languages (51)  – The Environment (27)
  – Diversity/Inclusion (49)  – Critical Thinking (27)
  – Service/Community Engagement (41)
Question 6: Free Response

• The final question allowed respondents to offer ideas about what else should be taken into consideration as the Marquette community reflects on ways to improve the Core
• 160 respondents took this opportunity to provide general comments

• [Discuss summary of Question 6 comments here]