Core Curriculum Committee
End of Year Report
April 22nd, 2013

After nearly ten years of discussing, planning, researching, proposing, more planning, organizing; of the CCTF and the CCIC and the CCC, in 2012–2013 we finally began the new Saint Mary's Core Curriculum! Inevitable minor hiccups aside, this first year has gone very smoothly. The members of the campus should be very proud of our joint accomplishment.

Of course, designing a curriculum is one thing, developing and enriching it is another. This past year was one of transition for the Core Curriculum Committee, as we began to turn from inventing the content, policies and procedures of the new core toward the management and development of it.

This report summarizes some of ours actions, outlining our chief accomplishments, our plans for 2013-14, and some of the challenges we face.

Successes and Accomplishments

Course Designations

The CCC designated approximately 60 courses into the Core during 2011–12; this year we designated an additional 110 courses. It appears we have now have a sufficient number of courses to cover our needs across the Habits of Mind and Pathways to Knowledge goals, and made progress toward meeting them in the Engaging the World areas.

Proposals were submitted in October, considered by the appropriate Working Groups in late fall and the CCC in December and January. Thanks to a year of practice, this process went smoothly, and we expect to follow a very similar one in future years. The Working Groups seem to be taking on the role of support, helping faculty strengthen their proposals and serving as expert assistance, while the CCC is responsible for ensuring consistency in standards, both year-to-year and across goals.

Integration of January Term

The process we used to gather proposals for Jan Term 2013 was not optimal, and we ended up having to reach out individually to instructors asking goal them to complete an additional proposal beyond their original Jan Term application. This, and the necessary exclusion of most upper division courses, led to only eighteen designations. The spring 2013 process is substantially

better (many thanks to the Jan Term folks) and has produced 67 courses applying for a total of 116 Engaging the World designations. This should result in a terrific increase in Jan Term courses designated for at least one Engaging the World goal.

Assessment of the Core

The new Core was built with student learning as the first priority, and we developed learning goal and outcome language to be very clear to ourselves and our students what the purposes of their education are. Inseperable from this is the need to understand how well our students are learning so we can make adjustments when necessary. Several such assessment projects are now underway or being planned: Seminar–Composition alignment is being headed by José Feito and Lisa Manter, Critical Thinking by Chris Procello and Jim Sauerberg, Shared Inquiry by Ellen Rigsby. Many of the Working Groups are also taking up this issue (see below).

The most substantial project thus far has been the Social Historical Cultural Understanding assessment project, led by Jennifer Heung. (Please see the report given the Senate for details.) This year-long pilot has demonstrated that SMC can perform cross-departmental assessment in a way that is both meaningful and managable. We add that the assistance of Chris Procello, the Director of Educational Effectiveness has been crucial.

Comunity Engagement

Community Engagement courses at the College have previously been taught by a small number of faculty members with excellent Community Engagement pedagogical training and years of experience. Certain majors have been known for providing quality Community Engagement experiences, so this has been a highly developed curricular offering in small pockets at the College. The requirement that all students now have at least one Community Engagement course or experience has created a need for many more Community Engagement sections at the College than have previously existed. We have begun to address this in several ways. Richard Carp formed the "CE Hub" to bring together administrators, CCC faculty, and CILSA with the purpose of providing the administrative muscle necesssary to support the Community Engagement goal. The members of the Hub, along with the members of the CE/CG Working Group, have worked diligently to identify areas within the current curriculum where a Community Engagement experience is a good fit, and have encouraged faculty to develop and

teach the resulting courses. The CG/CE working group has spent numerous hours working with individual faculty members to develop spring Community Engagement proposals, and has added an additional spring Community Engagement proposal submission deadline. The working group is now reviewing the large number of Community Engagement applications that were generated for this second Community Engagement deadline. CILSA has taken on the organization of the legal and logistical responsibilities the Community Engagement entails, and has (and will) be providing a variety of faculty development opportunities for those interested in this pedagogy. We anticipate working with Cummins Institute to find ways of better incorporating Common Good into our curriculum.

We have made considerable progress, tripling the number of designations from last year, and then receiving an even large number of proposal during a second round process this spring. Cynthia Ganote and the CE/CG Working Group have shown an incredible dedication to this goal, and are to be lauded for their work.

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Issues Needing Study in 2013–14

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The CCC was created primarily to gather and evaluate proposals that courses be included in the Core, and we will be spending most of our time on this. However, there are a number of related issues we intend to take up.

Designation Renewal

The CCC has been deliberately vague on the length of time a course designation will last. On one hand, we have no desire to make work, for ourselves or for others. At the same time, we do expect that departments are in more-or-less continual conversation about the content, methods and purposes of their courses, and hope these conversations include the role(s) their courses can and should play within the Core. Since the Program Review cycle is one way departments document these conversations and changes, it makes some sense that designation renewal be part of the PRC cycle.

Responsibilites and Expectations of the Working Groups

The spring 2011 hopes of the Core Curriculum Implementation Committee (CCIC) were that the members of the various Working Groups would put in, say, 8 hours of hard work perhaps some Saturday early in Fall and then be

done for the year. This has proven not to be the case. The Artistic Understanding Working Group considered 44 proposals this past fall. The American Diversity/Global Perspective Working Group will be considering over 50 Jan Term proposals alone. The Social Historical Cultural Understanding Working Group added the responsibility for leading the SHCU assessment project to their duties. The CE/CG Working Group has been intensely involved in the development of campus standards for Community Engagement.

In addition, it has become clear that someone must take on the role of promoting the curricular coherence and development within each of the learning goals. The CCC has neither the time nor expertise to do this for all twelve learning goals, and so is moving toward viewing the Working Groups as the unit primarily responsible for overseeing their learning goal, including campus-wide promotion and coherence, pedagogical development, assurance of learning and assessment, review of syllabi, and the evaluation of designation proposals. Aspects of this role and these responsibilities are already familiar, while other aspects have yet to be practiced. This seems both necessary and uncomfortable.

CCC membership

The members of the CCC are currently chosen to provide adaquate school representation and assigned to Working Groups. But if the Working Groups are to be the curricular body chiefly responsible for overseeing their Learning Goal, it probably makes sense that they be chaired by faculty elected directly to that Working Group, which would make the CCC into a committee of Working Group chairs. We also should consider what administration representation is needed by the CCC.

Engaging the World Experiences

Our *ur*-document, Model 1, indicates that the Engaging the World goals may be satisfied by "qualifying experiences". We need to determine what this means and find ways to provide and evaluate such experiences.

Challenges

During this year we have also seen surface several challenges, that we list below. (Not least among these is the difficulty in determining which parts of the CCC experience thus far will be permanent and continuing, and which are artifacts of the initialization process.)

4

Document Management, Clerical Workload

The paperwork manangment expectation of the CCC chair are considerable. The course proposals of Fall 2012 involved collecting, organizing and distributing approximately 700 (electronic) documents, as well as correspondence with approximately 90 faculty members. Tasking a full professor with this does not seem like a good use of resources.

Workload of the Working Groups, expecially the Engaging the World Working Groups

The various Working Groups put in an admirable amout of effort this year, and we expect that some (much?) of this will abate as the number of new proposals falls. Some of the time will instead be spent with overseeing their learning goal(s). Expanding the responsibilities of the approximately 28 working group members does, however, add to the overall workload of the faculty in a fairly significant way. How to balance?

The Engaging the World Working Groups, in particular, will likely continue to face a substantial review load, since they will be engaging in at least two cycles of proposal evaluation each year, as well as overseeing two different learning goals each. This is a very heavy burden and has been one of the reasons why some of our responsibilities (e.g., Common Good courses, defining Engaging the World experiences) are undone.

Responsibility for supplying Core courses

We will always have enough Habits of Mind courses, since supplying them is among the duties of the Seminar and Composition directors. We are likely to always have enough Pathways to Knowledge courses because if we have too few, some of those courses will be oversubscribed and the associated department chair will add sections. Put another way, staffing these two parts of the Core are, functionally, departmental responsibilties. This model clearly fails for the Engaging the World goals as the most responsible party, the Chair of the CCC, has no ability to supply courses.

This shortfall may provide some minor motivation for departments to develop and designate Engaging the World courses, since it will help their majors graduate on time more easily. Relative to competing goals, however, departments are likely to focus their energies on courses of action that have more direct benefits to their majors, leaving us to rely upon Jan Term. Unfortunately, there is little direct benefit for the faculty member who chooses to apply for an Engaging the World designation for a Jan Term course.

Faculty, Hiring and Retention

The hiring and R&T process do not seem to offer as many obvious rewards for effectively participating in the Core as for completing departmental objectives. (Obviously, this varies considerably by department and school.) Said another way, if a department says developing a new departmental course is more important than teaching, say, an American Diversity or Seminar course, then to the un-tenured it *is* more important. But it is only more important to the department, and not necessarily to the College.

In closing, I'd like to thank the faculty for their participation and patience as we collectively develop the Core, the academic administration for their material and intellectual support, the library for their drive to improve all things educational, and the members of the CCC for their diligent and effective work. Finally, I am very grateful to our departing members, Cynthia Ganote, Rebecca Jabbour and Ed Tywoniak, whose devotion to our students can be seen in their assiduous efforts on their behalf.

Respectfully submitted

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