Core Curriculum Committee
End of Year Report
May 7th, 2012

The 2011–12 academic year was an extraordinarily busy, challenging and productive one for the members of the Core Curriculum Implementation Committee (CCIC), the Core Curriculum Committee (CCC) and the various Working Groups. (See the final pages for memberships.) By the end of 2010–11 the Academic Senate had approved a set of learning outcomes for each new learning goal; it was the task of these groups to turn these outcomes into a curriculum. We are very proud of the progress we have made to do so. In this report I briefly outline the efforts involved in making this happen.

Fall 2011 began during Academic Planning Day when the CCIC and CCC (which generally met in joint session throughout the year) mapped out the duties ahead, and then met with the Working Groups to explain in some detail the structure, content and purpose of the new Core Curriculum. The main task for the year was to provide a curriculum for the members of the 2012 freshman class.

The CCIC had previously decided that departments and programs would be writing some sort of application, proposing their courses for the core. During the first portion of the fall, the CCIC/CCC and the Working Groups wrestled with determining how detailed these proposals would need to be, and how they would be evaluated. Meanwhile, the CCIC/CCC continued its series of presentations on the Core, to new faculty, to the chairs and program directors, and to several other groups and bodies on campus. By the middle of October the application template was complete, and the so-called Feedback Forms were made public. On October 13th many Working Group members spent part of their fall holiday learning the fundamentals of assessment, while members of the CCIC were available to assist faculty who had begun writing their course proposals.

The CCIC/CCC also devoted considerable time to the consequences of previous decisions. Here are three examples. In spring 2011 the CCIC had determined that Pathways to Knowledge courses must have as their “primary” focus the learning outcomes at hand, while Engaging the World courses needed the outcomes to be “integral” to their content. While this had helped clarify some things (it implied, for example, that no course could satisfy two Pathways to Knowledge goals, as no course could have two very different primary objectives), there was much conversation trying to provide further guidance on how to interpret these as applied directly to the learning
outcomes and course proposals.

Another such consequence was the realization that postponing English 5 until the spring of the sophomore year would have several previously unnoticed deleterious effects. This eventually led to the Senate’s acceptance of our proposal that English 5 should be taken when best fitting the student’s major, generally in the spring of the first year.

As a final example, the traditional four-year on-campus student had been uppermost in everyone’s minds while the theoretical and then practical aspects of the new core were being developed. Translating this to the adult undergraduate programs proved a challenge, and these conversations continue to this day.

By December the course proposals were (mostly) complete, and December and January were a somewhat frantic period of consideration, evaluation, and correspondence with applicants. Happily, this resulted in over 60 courses being designated for at least one of the learning goals of the Core. I reported on this in some detail to the Senate at its February 9th 2012 meeting, and don’t repeat that here. I do wish to note that, given the size and the novelty of this process, we had few serious difficulties and only a small number of bruised feelings, results I credit to the good will, patience and hard work of those involved.

The spring semester had several significant, if somewhat more disparate, accomplishments. The inaugural designation process was dissected and critiqued – with experience and a more relaxed timeline we are confident that next fall will go more smoothly. Language describing the new Core was developed and included in the 2012–13 Catalog of Courses. This language also forms the basis of the still-developing page on the college’s external website about the core. After the development of a job description, the search for our first Director of Educational Effectiveness ended successfully with the hire of Chris Procello. With him on board, the development of an assessment process that would be proper and useful to the campus was begun. Finally, we have been working to add concreteness to Model 1’s adoption of writing across the curriculum so that we can provide guidance to programs and departments as they work on this newly required writing in the discipline course.

The work of your faculty colleagues on the CCIC, CCC and the various Working Groups should make you very proud. Through their thoughtfulness and hard work (assisted in no small part by various members of the administration, and provided significant support by the provost), the faculty have
successfully implemented our new Core Curriculum.

Respectfully submitted

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