

The Neumann University Core Experience

Newsletter

August 2013 **Volume 3, Issue 1**

Dear Colleagues,

Welcome to academic year 2013-2014! As we begin the second year of implementation of the revised Core program: *The Neumann University Core Experience*, I am please to share with you information about the assessment of the Core Communication learning outcomes and this year's focus on learning outcomes related to Contemplation and Conscience. The newsletter also includes a preview of the professional development programs available this year.

Thank you in advance for making time to read this newsletter!

Sr. Pat Hutchison, OSF

Core Curriculum Task Force

Two members of the Core Task Force have (or will) be transitioning from Neumann. Sr. Dorothy Bredehoft is now ministering at Chestnut Hill College and Jim Gallo will be leaving Neumann to assume a position at Villanova University. We are grateful for the contributions of Sr. Dorothy and Jim to the Core Task Force and wish them well as they leave.

We welcome Dan McKee to the task force and look forward to a new member to represent co-curricular areas.

Members of the Core Curriculum Task Force include:

Janelle Ketrack-Gillespie, Ed.D. (Arts & Sciences)
Claudia Kovach, Ph.D. (Arts & Sciences)
Ahmed Nuriye, Ph.D. (Arts & Sciences)
John Kruse, Ph.D. (Theology)
Daniel McKee, Ed.D. (Education and Human Services)
Nancy Laplante, Ph.D. (Nursing and Health Services)
Arde Shahmaei, Ph. D. (Business and Information Management)
Jilian Donnelly, M.Ed. (CAPS)
Jacqueline Martin M.S.(CAPS)
Sr. Janet Thiel, Ph.D. (AVPAA)
Representative of Co-curricular areas (TBA)
Sr. Pat Hutchison, Ed.D. (Core Director)

Important Reminders for Everyone (repeated from March 2013 newsletter)

Please remember that there is an inner logic to the sequence of courses for the new Core, especially the signature courses. Theology 104 is foundational for Philosophy 102 and both form the foundation for the upper level theology and philosophy courses. Offering courses throughout the student's career (Theology 104 in first year; Philosophy 102 in second year; and the upper level theology and philosophy courses in the third and fourth years) invites students to consider what literature calls "big questions" as they mature.

Every major developed a program plan which properly integrates the required Core courses. Program plans are published in the online catalogs; however, when the appropriate courses are not available, there have been choices made which divert from the required sequence. Please remember that all students who entered Neumann University in Fall 2012 (whether as first year or transfer students) follow the revised Core program. It is not too soon to review the proper sequence in preparation for the November registration days and also as students scramble over the next two weeks to drop and add courses!

You may wish to place a copy of the following directives near the computer as you register students:

The sequence of signature courses has been carefully constructed. Students must take these courses in the following order:

- INT 101 must be taken in the first year
- Theology 104 must be taken in the first year
- Philosophy 102 must be taken in the second year after students have successfully completed Theology 104
- Upper level Theology and Philosophy courses must be taken in the third or fourth year

Transfer students who entered Neumann University after Fall 2012 must take courses in the sequence noted above and should adhere as closely as possible to the year noted. Transfer students are not required to take CA 206 or INT 202 (unless the course has been retained in the major). In addition, Philosophy 103 (Introduction to Philosophy) is not required in the revised Core.

A question has been raised about students who resist taking Theology 104 because they "may" transfer. The Core Task Force discussed this at length during our planning. We concluded that Theology 104, which explicitly reflects the Catholic Franciscan tradition, would be required of first year students, regardless of whether they "may" transfer. Surveys reveal that as many as 40% of students say that they may transfer; however, many students become engaged and remain at Neumann. Theology 104 professors have a commitment to promote student engagement which may actually encourage students to remain at Neumann. Therefore, please do not defer enrolling a student in Theology 104.

Core Assessment 2012-2013: Focus on Communication

During the 2012-2013 academic year, Communication competencies were the focus of the Core Curriculum assessment. Specifically, learning outcomes associated with oral and written communication and information literacy were assessed. The Core Task Force is extremely grateful to everyone who participated in this process by submitting written papers and information literacy research packets and by welcoming visitors to the classroom to assess oral presentations. Plans for improvement are due November 22, 2013.

Learning Outcome 5.1

Express ideas clearly and effectively in written form

Direct measures used to assess competency in written communication included ETS Proficiency Profile scores for Writing, relevant questions from the Neumann University Co-op/Internship Employer Evaluation of Students, and written work products from first year students enrolled in English 102 or Honors 112 and junior or senior level students enrolled in upper division courses identified by each major program.

ETS Proficiency Profile scores from 364 first year students tested in 2009 were compared with scores from 352 senior students tested in the 2012-2013 academic year.

Work products from first year students included 63 individually written papers. At the upper level three majors submitted a total of 15 group papers, and nine majors submitted 44 individually written papers. Six members of the Neumann University faculty assessed these written papers using the Neumann University five-feature rubric for Written Communication which is based on the AAC&U VALUE rubric. The results of the assessments revealed a high inter-rater reliability (0.853) which suggests that the scores obtained are a valid indicator of student achievement.

Employer evaluations of 72 business majors and 57 Arts and Science majors engaged in internships and coops during the academic year provided a snapshot of student abilities in writing on the job.

Indirect measures of competency in written communication involved an analysis of 11 questions from the National Survey of Student Engagement. The analysis examined results from freshmen and seniors who participated in the survey in Spring 2013, as well as a comparison of results from the freshmen of 2010 and the seniors of 2013. (This analysis will be completed when NSSE survey results are received in early September 2013.)

Learning Outcome 5.2

Express ideas clearly and effectively in spoken form

Direct measures used to assess competency in oral communication included relevant questions from the Neumann University Co-op/Internship Employer Evaluation of Students, and oral presentations from first year students enrolled in English 102 or Honors 112 and junior or senior level students enrolled in upper division courses identified by each major program.

Twenty-one Neumann University faculty and staff members assessed oral presentations by 62 first year students and 123 senior students. Five upper level classes required group presentations which increased the number of students assessed in certain majors. These presentations were assessed with a 10-feature Neumann University rubric for Oral Communication adapted from the AAC&U VALUE rubric. The results of the assessments revealed an inter-rater reliability of 0.966 which suggests that the scores obtained are a valid indicator of student achievement.

Employer evaluations of 72 business majors and 57 Arts and Science majors engaged in internships and coops during the academic year provided a snapshot of student's oral communication skills in a professional setting.

Indirect measures of competency in oral communication involved an analysis of two questions from the National Survey of Student Engagement. The analysis examined results from freshmen and seniors who participated in the survey in Spring 2013, as well as a comparison of results from the freshmen of 2010 and the seniors of 2013. (This analysis will be completed when NSSE survey results are received in early September 2013.)

Learning Outcome 5.4

Access, evaluate, cite, and credit information using accepted conventions

Direct measures used to assess competency in information literacy included Information Literacy packets prepared by Neumann University research librarians with an accompanying written paper. The Information Literacy packet and the accompanying paper were assessed with a 5-feature rubric developed by the reference librarians and based on the AAC & U Information Literacy Value rubric. The feature related to Information Literacy on the rubric for Written Communication was also examined.

Two reference librarians and a member of the Core Task Force collaborated to assess 42 work products from first year students and 12 work products from upper level students. Because the assessors discussed each work product at length, there is confidence that the results of the assessment are a valid indication of student competence in the area of information literacy.

There was also a review of the Information Literacy feature of work products from 60 first year students and, at the upper level, 15 group papers and 39 individually written papers.

Because the analysis of competency in information literacy revealed issues related to Reading and Critical Thinking, the results of the ETS Proficiency profile in Reading and Critical Thinking were also included as direct measures in this analysis.

Indirect measures of competency in information literacy involved an analysis of four questions from the National Survey of Student Engagement. The analysis examined results from freshmen and seniors who participated in the survey in Spring 2013, as well as a comparison of results from the freshmen of 2010 and the seniors of 2013. (This analysis will be completed when NSSE survey results are received in early September 2013.)

Core Assessment 2012-2013: Focus on Communication

Next Steps

The Core Task Force has offered several recommendations for improvement and invites faculty from Writing courses (English 101 and 102) and faculty in the major programs and undergraduate disciplines without majors to review results and provide a written plan for improvement by November 22, 2013.

A summary of the findings from the Core Communication assessment was presented to writing (English 101 and 102) faculty members on August 16 and to full-time faculty members on August 22, 2013. The complete Core Communication assessment report was also shared with the Vice President for Academic Affairs and all Division Deans. The full report will be available for review on SharePoint. In addition, we invite you to Lunch and Learn sessions to discuss the results in greater depth according to the following schedule:

LO 5.1 Written communication **September 9, 10, 11, 12**

LO 5.4 Information Literacy **October 7, 8, 9, 10**

LO 5.2 Oral Communication **November 4, 5, 6, 7**

The same presentation will be offered on each day

Monday and Tuesday (11:30 – 12:30); Wednesday (12:40 – 1:40); Thursday (1:00 – 2:00).

We also encourage attendance at the Lunch and Learn series on **College Reading and Critical Thinking** presented by Sr. Janet Thiel during the week of September 23 to 26; the series on **Assessment Practices** from October 21 to 24; and the series on the **NU Student Profile and Impact on Teaching and Learning** from November 18 to 21. These workshops will be repeated in February, March, and April 2014.

If these dates and times are not convenient, please contact Sr. Pat Hutchison at hutchisp@neumann.edu or call 610-361-5407 to schedule a more convenient time.

Core Assessment Plan for 2013-2014

This year assessment will focus on learning outcomes related to *Contemplation* and *Conscience*. The Core Task, in collaboration with faculty and staff members, is currently revising the Assessment Plans for these learning outcomes, and developing rubrics adapted from the nationally validated AAC&U VALUE rubrics. The revised assessment plans and rubrics will be posted on the NU Core Experience website within the next few weeks.

It is essential to remember that the assessment piece is important, BUT we all have a responsibility, both inside and outside the classroom, to promote the Core Learning Outcomes. Every experience and every encounter that a student has on campus should contribute to the Core. As faculty begin classes, and as co-curricular areas plan programs, please take time to review the Core Philosophy and Learning Outcomes and identify where and how you are promoting them. <http://www.neumann.edu/CoreExperience/philosophy.asp>

This past January, faculty and staff members provided workshops on how to promote the outcomes associated with Contemplation and Conscience. Summaries of these workshops, which originally appeared in the March 2013 Core newsletter are repeated below.

Eileen Flanagan and John Kruse led two sessions on *Contemplation* with a supplemental presentation on how the athletic department has promoted reflection, presented by Christy Malone. These sessions provided background on reflection, especially theological reflection in light of our Catholic Franciscan tradition. After laying a conceptual foundation, Eileen and John invited participants to experience a simple reflection. In addition to theory, the presenters offered concrete suggestions for incorporating reflection into multiple disciplines and encouraged participants to share their own experiences in this area. Christy Malone shared the response of several coaches to an invitation from Athletic Director Chuck Sack to develop reflective journals with student-athletes. Participants in these workshops expressed gratitude to the presenters and enthusiasm for the opportunity to learn and share ideas and best practices. **If you were not able to attend the workshop and wish additional information, contact Sr. Pat Hutchison or one of the presenters!**

Core Assessment Plan for 2013-2014 (continued)

Philosophy professors John Mizzoni, Philip Pegan, and Geoffrey Karabin provided research on ethical reasoning in young adults and the importance of education in this area. They then presented the foundation that every Neumann student receives in Philosophy 102: Exploring Ethics. The professors highlighted the emphasis on ethics informed by the Catholic Franciscan tradition and described how they integrate this perspective. John Mizzoni shared an outline of his soon to be published text on *Catholic Franciscan Ethics*. This text, which has received an Imprimatur from Archbishop Charles Chaput, will be used in Philosophy 102: Exploring Ethics, beginning this year.

The philosophy professors also provided samples of the essay questions they use to assess understanding of ethics informed by the Catholic Franciscan tradition; rubrics employed; and examples of student essays demonstrating various levels of achievement. We hope that those who teach ethics in the majors will build on the foundation established in Exploring Ethics. Participants in the workshop shared a number of ways they intend to incorporate ethical formation into their teaching and expressed appreciation for the presentation. **If you were not able to attend the workshop and wish additional information, contact Sr. Pat Hutchison or one of the philosophy professors.**

Professional Development Continues

Service-Learning

Beginning in Fall 2014 every upper level theology class and at least one course in every major program will integrate Service-Learning. Many faculty members have already incorporated Service-Learning into their classes and have generously shared their experiences with those who are still in the planning process. Several faculty members attended Service-Learning workshops this past year. The Service-Learning website <http://www.neumann.edu/academics/service-learning/default.asp> contains policies, procedures, and a wealth of resources for identifying community partners and successfully developing and implementing a course. Service-Learning will be the focus of the Lunch and Learn series scheduled for February 3, 4, 5, and 6.

Capstone Courses

By academic year 2015-2016, every major is required to offer a capstone course. Please review the document *Capstone in the Majors* available on the NU Core Experience website <http://www.neumann.edu/CoreExperience/Capstone.pdf>. We also invite you to attend the Lunch and Learn series which will focus on Capstones on March 17, 18, 19, and 20.

January 14, 2014 Professional Development Day

Mark your calendar now for January 14, 2014. Among the professional development opportunities planned for that day will be sessions on *Integrating Writing Successfully into Every Discipline*, *Improving Comprehension*, and *Promoting Compassion*. Comprehension and Compassion are the focus of the Core assessment next academic year.

A Closing Thought

During this year our University theme is *Live the Truth in Love: Stewardship*. Perhaps it would be possible to combine the focus on *Stewardship* with the Core values of *Contemplation* and *Conscience*. Consider integrating into classes a reflection on one of the aspects of Stewardship and discussions on the ethical issues related to Environmental Stewardship. For resources, films, and reflective materials, contact the Neumann Institute for Franciscan Studies.

