

The Neumann University Core Experience

Newsletter

August 2014 **Volume 4, Issue 1**

Dear Colleagues,

Welcome to academic year 2014-2015! As we begin the third year of implementation of the revised Core program: *The Neumann University Core Experience*, I am pleased to share with you information about the assessment of the Core *Contemplation* and *Conscience* learning outcomes and this year's focus on learning outcomes related to *Comprehension* and *Compassion*.

During the 2013-2014 academic year, Contemplation and Conscience competencies were the focus of the Core Curriculum assessment. This report describes the assessment protocols for learning outcomes related to both. Analysis and action steps will be developed by faculty after their review. In addition to Core Task Force members, several Neumann University faculty and staff assisted in the Assessment Process. 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!

Dr. Pat Hutchins, OSF

Learning Outcome 2.1 Apply the principles and values of the Catholic Franciscan tradition to personal, professional, and societal questions and issues

Assessment Protocol

Direct measures used to assess competency in this area included written work products from first year students enrolled in Theology 104 and Honors 105, junior or senior level students enrolled in upper division theology courses and a biology course, and CAPS division students enrolled in LSTHEO 200. In addition to the written work products from academic courses, there was a review of the evaluations of the Capstone Reflections from 28 graduating seniors in the Institute for Student Leadership.

Various assessments conducted by the Institute for Sport, Spirituality and Character Development and the Neumann University Athletic Department in the past did not reveal substantial data on the effects of contemplative practice on the leadership development of student-athletes. This upcoming academic year (2014-15), the Institute will conduct a pilot study examining the impact reflective practice has on the leadership development of student-athletes by using Kouzes and Posner's Student Leadership Practices Inventory (S-LPI) as pre- and post-measurements and reflective exercises in between. Results from this particular study will be examined to determine the assessment strategy of student-athletes for 2015-16 and beyond. The work of the ISSCD will provide valuable information related to reflection, including application of the principles and values of the Catholic Franciscan tradition.

Work products from first year students included 94 individually written papers. At the upper level there were 48 individually written papers. Six members of the Neumann community participated in an all-day norming session. At the conclusion of the norming session, each of the six participants individually scored approximately 52 papers, using the Neumann University three-feature rubric for Reflection which is based on the AAC&U VALUE rubric. When there was a discrepancy of more than one point on any feature of the written rubric, a third reader scored the paper. Finally, the scores of the reviewers were averaged. The results of the assessments revealed 46 instances in which there was a discrepancy of one-point or more in the scores assigned by the raters. The reflection rubric contains three features; this means that there were 426 individual ratings. Assessing inter-rater reliability showed a correlation of 0.892, a higher inter-rater score. This indicates that the rubric itself is a reliable instrument, and the scores obtained are a valid indicator of student achievement.

Indirect measures of competency in reflection involved an analysis of questions from the National Survey of Student Engagement Catholic Colleges and Universities supplement 2013, questions from the 2014 Noel-Levitz survey of all students, NU alumni survey questions, and NU Mission survey questions. All surveys reflected most recent data.

N.B. The Core committee, in collaboration with the theology department, agreed that LO 2.1 and 2.2 would be assessed using the same rubric applied to the written artifacts submitted. Please note that data related to the written artifacts for LO 2.1 should also be applied to LO 2.2.

Learning Outcome 2.2

Engage in self-reflection

Assessment Protocol

Direct measures used to assess competency in this area included written work products from first year students enrolled in Theology 104 or Honors 105, junior or senior level students enrolled in upper division theology courses and a biology course, and CAPS division students enrolled in LSTHEO 200. In addition to the written work products from theology classes, there was a review of the evaluations of the Capstone Reflections from 28 graduating seniors in the Institute for Student Leadership. Please see LO 2.1 for details.

Indirect measures of competency in reflection involved an analysis of questions from the National Survey of Student Engagement 2013, the 2014 Noel-Levitz survey of all students, NU alumni survey questions, and NU Mission survey questions. All surveys reflected most recent data.

Learning Outcome 2.3:

Embrace life-long learning

Assessment Protocol

Direct measures used to assess competency in life-long learning included a convenience sample of 30 individually written reflections from students in senior seminar classes and two group threaded discussions from students in CAPS senior seminars. Six members of the Neumann community participated in an all-day norming session. At the conclusion of the norming session, each of the six participants individually scored approximately 10 papers, using the Neumann University five-feature rubric for Life-Long Learning which is based on the AAC&U VALUE rubric. When there was a discrepancy of more than one point on any feature of the written rubric, a third reader scored the paper. Finally, the scores of the reviewers were averaged. The results of the assessments revealed 11 instances in which there was a discrepancy of one-point or more in the scores assigned by the raters. The reflection rubric contains five features; this means that there were 160 individual ratings. Assessing inter-rater reliability showed a correlation of 0.931, a higher inter-rater score. This indicates that the rubric itself is a reliable instrument, and the scores obtained are a valid indicator of student achievement.

Indirect measures of competency in Life-long Learning involved an analysis of questions from the NU Alumni Survey and from the National Survey of Student Engagement. The analysis of the NSSE data 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.

Learning Outcome 2.4**Discern career and vocational choices***Assessment Protocol*

Direct measures included an analysis of student participation in services offered through the Career Office. Indirect measures included relevant questions on Noel-Levitz, NSSE, Alumni, and Mission surveys.

Learning Outcome 2.5**Recognize and appreciate creative expression***Assessment Protocol*

Direct measures used to assess competency in this area included written work products from 16 students enrolled in Music 101 and 104. Four members of the Neumann community participated in an all-day norming session. At the conclusion of the norming session, each of the four participants individually scored approximately 4 papers, using the Neumann University five-feature rubric for Reflection which is based on the AAC&U VALUE rubric. When there was a discrepancy of more than one point on any feature of the written rubric, a third reader scored the paper. Finally, the scores of the reviewers were averaged. The results of the assessments revealed 3 instances in which there was a discrepancy of one-point or more in the scores assigned by the raters. The reflection rubric contains five features; this means that there were 80 individual ratings. Assessing inter-rater reliability showed a correlation of 0.963, a high inter-rater score. This indicates that the rubric itself is a reliable instrument, and the scores obtained are a valid indicator of student achievement.

Indirect measures of competency in recognizing and appreciating creative expression involved an analysis of questions from the National Survey of Student Engagement. All surveys reflected most recent data.

Learning Outcome 3.1**Demonstrate personal, professional, and academic honesty***Assessment Protocol*

Direct measures used to assess competency in this area included campus reports of security violations, student incidents requiring judicial review, and academic reports of plagiarism. Indirect measures included questions from NU Mission surveys, NSSE, NSSE Catholic Cohort, and Noel-Levitz mission questions.

Learning Outcome 3.2**Accept responsibility for the consequences of their actions***Assessment Protocol*

Direct measures used to assess competency in this area included relevant questions from the NU Student Coop Employer Evaluation and student responses to interventions following referrals and student incidents.

Indirect measures of competency in reflection involved an analysis of questions from the National Survey of Student Engagement 2013 and the NU Mission survey questions. All surveys reflected most recent data.

Please see also information related to Student Conduct provided in LO 3.1. There is a great deal of overlap with regard to these learning outcomes.

Learning Outcome 3.3

Engage as responsible members and leaders of diverse groups

Assessment Protocol

Direct measures used to assess competency in this area included a convenience sample of surveys completed by students who engaged in teamwork over several weeks in three academic courses and in the Institute for Student Leadership, Student Coop Employer Evaluations, and student and community responses to student growth in ISL.

Indirect measures of competency involved an analysis of select questions from the NSSE, Mission, and Noel-Levitz surveys.

Learning Outcome 3.4

Exercise ethical decision-making, informed by the Catholic Franciscan tradition, in a variety of settings

Assessment Protocol

Direct measures included an analysis of student work products related to ethical reasoning. There were 98 papers reviewed from students in Philosophy 102 and 90 papers reviewed from students in upper level courses and in CAPS courses. Four members of the Neumann community participated in an all-day norming session. At the conclusion of the norming session, each of the four participants individually scored approximately 100 papers, using the Neumann University three-feature rubric for Ethical Reasoning which is based on the AAC&U VALUE rubric. When there was a discrepancy of more than one point on any feature of the written rubric, a third reader scored the paper. Finally, the scores of the reviewers were averaged. The results of the assessments revealed 89 instances in which there was a discrepancy of one-point or more in the scores assigned by the raters. The reflection rubric contains three features; this means that there were 564 individual ratings. Assessing inter-rater reliability showed a correlation of 0.842, a moderately strong inter-rater score. This indicates that the rubric itself is a reliable instrument, and the scores obtained are a valid indicator of student achievement.

Direct measures also included relevant questions from Employer Coop Surveys. Indirect measures included relevant questions on Noel-Levitz, NSSE, and Mission surveys.

Next Steps

The Core Task Force has offered several recommendations for improvement and invites faculty and staff members to review results and provide a written plan for improvement by December 3, 2014. Analysis and action steps developed by faculty and staff will be shared at the Faculty Development Day on January 13, 2015.

The full report of the findings from the Core Contemplation and Core Conscience assessments will be available for review on SharePoint. We invite you to Lunch and Learn sessions to discuss the results in greater depth according to the following schedule:

Contemplation:	September 8-11, 2014
Life-long Learning and Capstones:	November 10-13, 2014
Conscience:	October 6-9, 2014

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).

All sessions will be in the Assisi Room of Bachmann. Beverages and dessert will be provided.

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 2014-2015

This year assessment will focus on learning outcomes related to ***Comprehension and Compassion***. Faculty members from disciplines in which learning outcomes will be assessed have developed rubrics adapted from the nationally validated AAC&U VALUE rubrics and designed appropriate assignments for assessment. The rubrics will be posted on the NU Core Experience website within the next few weeks.

It is essential to remember that 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>

Professional Development Continues

Service-Learning

Beginning in Fall 2014 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. Faculty members who will be integrating Service-Learning this year attended a workshop on May 15, 2014. At that workshop, Dr. Marisa Rauscher shared her experience in designing and revising a Service-Learning course, Dr. John Kruse shared approaches to reflection, Sr. Maggie Gannon (president of Drexel Neumann Academy) shared the expectations and challenges of community partners, and Kathy McCauley and I shared policies and procedures. 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.

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 February 2 through 5, 2015.

Communication and Technology

During the 2015-2016 academic year, the focus of assessment will be learning outcomes related to communication (oral and written communication, information literacy, and technology). Lunch and Learn sessions from March 9 – 12, 2015 will focus on these areas.

Professional Development Day—January 13, 2015

Mark your calendar now for January 13, 2015. Among the professional development opportunities planned for that day will be sessions on ***Strategies to Improve Reflection and Ethical Reasoning, Improving Comprehension, and Promoting Compassion***.

Important Reminders for Everyone

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) provides a foundation on which courses in the major can explore critical issues and questions in light of our mission as a Catholic university in the Franciscan tradition.

Please remember that all students who entered Neumann University in Fall 2012 (whether as first year or transfer students) follow the revised Core program. 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.

The current catalog includes the pre-requisites for each course and revised guidelines for the minimum number of credits which must be acquired before enrolling in Philosophy 102 and upper level theology and philosophy courses. Please contact Dr. John Mizzoni (philosophy) and Dr. John Kruse (theology) to discuss exceptions to the sequence or to the prerequisites.

Please note that Introduction to Art Production and Performance (ARTPP 180) is now accepted as a Fine Arts core course.

Core Curriculum Task Force Members

Dr. Nancy Laplante, an original member of the Core Task Force, has transitioned from Neumann University to Widener. In addition, Arde Shahmaei, John Kruse, and Ahmed Nuriye have begun service on other University committees.

Laura Strubeck, coordinator of LLC II, has joined the Core Task Force, adding an important perspective on Student Life. We welcome Laura and the following faculty members to the task force: Sandra Weiss, Kathleen Gerhart-Gibson, Robert McMonagle, and Karen Thomas.

Members of the Core Curriculum Task Force include:

Sarah Cazella
Jilian Donnelly
Kathleen Gerhart-Gibson
Janelle Ketrack-Gillespie
Claudia Kovach
Daniel McKee
Robert McMonagle
Laura Strubeck
Sr. Janet Thiel
Karen Thomas
Sandra Weiss
Sr. Patricia Hutchison, chair
Gerard O'Sullivan, ex officio

