

The Neumann University Core Experience

Newsletter

August 2017 **Volume 7, Issue 1**

Dear Colleagues,

Welcome to academic year 2017-2018! Thank you for all that you are doing to promote the Core learning outcomes. There is much to share about the undergraduate Core program. This past year, the Core Committee completed a comprehensive program review. Many of you participated by completing a survey in November 2016. Please take a few moments to review the [Faculty Survey](#) and the [Staff Survey](#). In addition, some faculty and staff members participated in focus groups and/or conducted focus groups with students. In the Fall, Dr. DiPaolo will assemble an external team to review the Five-Year Program Review. The areas that we can address immediately are described in this newsletter.

I am also pleased to share information about the assessment of the Core *Contemplation* and *Conscience* learning outcomes. Thank you to everyone who participated in some way in the assessment process. The complete [Core Assessment reports](#) are available on SharePoint. During the 2017-2018 year, the focus of Core assessment will be outcomes related to *Comprehension* and *Compassion*.

Thank you in advance for reading this newsletter!

Dr. Pat Hutchison, OSF

CORE ASSESSMENT 2016-2017: CONTEMPLATION AND CONSCIENCE

During the 2016-2017 academic year, *Contemplation* competencies were one focus of the Core Curriculum assessment. The specific learning outcomes assessed include:

Contemplation: Engage in meaningful reflection

- LO 2.1 Apply the principles and values of the Catholic Franciscan tradition to personal, professional, and societal questions and issues
- LO 2.2 Engage in self-reflection
- LO 2.3 Embrace life-long learning
- LO 2.4 Discern career and vocational choices
- LO 2.5 Recognize and appreciate creative expression.

Direct assessment measures included 138 reflection papers from students in Theology 104 and Honors 105 and 84 papers from students in upper level theology courses; 80 Transformation papers written by junior and senior students; and 25 creative expression papers. All papers were reviewed with Neumann-adapted AAC&U VALUE rubrics. Direct measures of career and vocational discernment included an analysis of student participation in services offered through the Career and Personal Development Office and the Office of Alumni Engagement. Indirect measures of learning outcomes related to *Contemplation* included student responses to relevant questions from the National Survey of Student Engagement 2016, the Noel Levitz satisfaction survey 2015, the First Destination alumni survey 2017, and a listing of career activities provided by several faculty members.

Six faculty and staff members assessed the student papers. Results of the assessments are available on [SharePoint](#). The *Contemplation* assessment report includes a comparison with the results of the 2013-2014 *Contemplation* assessments.

Neumann student responses to NSSE and Noel Levitz surveys were similar to peers in other institutions; however, surveys revealed that students desire greater engagement in activities that promote peace, justice, and care for creation. Students also desire additional opportunities to engage in reflective practices. Although students believe that Neumann encourages them to pursue creative opportunities beyond the classroom, students report that they participate in such activities at a lower rate than peers in other institutions. Responses to the First Destination Survey reveal that 2017 graduates believe that Neumann's Catholic Franciscan mission has influenced their personal and professional values.

Findings related to career and vocational discernment were very positive. Personnel from the Career and Personal Development Office and the Office of Alumni are providing students with valuable opportunities, and students report that they appreciate and benefit from these opportunities. In addition, several faculty members include in their classes a wide array of career-related opportunities. Despite the efforts of faculty and staff to help students to explore and clarify career possibilities, students indicate a desire for even greater support in this area.

To improve student performance on authentic assessments, it is recommended that assignments match the Core learning outcomes and the rubrics and that the assignments promote higher quality work by encouraging students to respond with detail and depth. To promote student growth in areas related to reflection, it is recommended that students have additional opportunities to engage in reflective practices. Furthermore, it is recommended that students participate in activities that promote peace, justice, and care for creation. There is also a need to identify additional ways to measure student recognition and appreciation of creative expression and to encourage students to participate in creative and cultural activities.

During the 2016-2017 academic year, *Conscience* competencies were another focus of the Core Curriculum assessment. The specific learning outcomes assessed include:

Conscience: Act ethically and responsibly

LO 3.1 Demonstrate personal, professional, and academic honesty

LO 3.2 Accept responsibility for the consequences of their actions

LO 3.3 Engage as responsible members and leaders of diverse groups

LO 3.4 Exercise ethical decision-making, informed by the Catholic Franciscan tradition, in a variety of settings.

Direct assessment measures included 102 ethics papers from students in Philosophy 102 and 90 ethics papers from students in upper level courses reviewed with a Neumann-adapted AAC&U VALUE rubric, Neumann University Internship Employer Evaluation of 49 Arts and Science and 79 Business students, and Preceptor Evaluations of 38 sophomore Athletic Training (ATR) students and 22 senior ATR students. Indirect measures included behavioral statistics from Campus Safety and the Dean of Students; statistics from the Retention Office; self-reports related to teamwork from 79 students; student responses to relevant questions from the National Survey of Student Engagement 2016 and the Noel Levitz survey 2015.

Six faculty and staff members assessed the student papers. Results of the assessments are available on [SharePoint](#). The assessment report also includes a comparison with the results of the 2013-2014 *Conscience* assessments.

Students reached the desired benchmark of 4.5 out of 5 on Neumann University Internship Employer Evaluations of Arts and Science students and Business students and Preceptor Evaluations of senior Athletic Training students. In addition, students reported that they believe they have achieved proficiency in skills related to teamwork.

Student responses to NSSE and Noel Levitz surveys were similar to peers in other institutions; however, surveys revealed that students desire greater respect for differences and additional guidance related to ethical decision-making and inclusion of ethical discussions in class.

To improve student performance on authentic assessments, it is recommended that assignments match the Core learning outcomes and the rubrics and that the assignments promote higher quality work by encouraging students to respond with detail and depth. To promote student growth in areas related to ethical reasoning, it is recommended that students have additional opportunities to engage with persons from diverse groups and that students learn how to discuss challenging and/or conflictual issues. Furthermore, it is recommended that faculty and staff members provide students opportunities to analyze and discuss ethical issues and challenges.

NEXT STEPS

Results of assessment of written papers have been shared with the faculty members who submitted the student work. Early in the Fall semester, the Core Committee will review all assessment results. In addition, we invite you to Lunch and Learn sessions in the Assisi Room (BMB 314) from September 12 to September 15, to discuss the results in greater depth.

Contemplation results: Tuesday (11:30 – 12:30) and Wednesday (12:40 – 1:40)

Conscience results: Thursday (1:00 – 2:00) and Friday (11:30 -12:30)

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 2017 - 2018

This year assessment will focus on learning outcomes related to **Comprehension** and **Compassion**. Please see the [updated Core assessment plan](#) and the rubrics related to [Comprehension](#) and [Compassion](#). In addition to considering how the Core learning outcomes related to *Comprehension* and *Compassion* are promoted and assessed through the curriculum, we are developing a more direct focus on co-curricular areas.

Comprehension: Think critically, creatively, and analytically

- LO 1.1 Analyze and solve complex problems
- LO 1.2 Demonstrate quantitative reasoning
- LO 1.3 Demonstrate scientific literacy
- LO 1.4 Explore the relationship of contemporary and historical events and issues.

Compassion: Respect all of creation

- LO 4.1 Honor the worth and dignity of each person
- LO 4.2 Interact respectfully in the local and global community
- LO 4.3 Engage in service to promote the common good
- LO 4.4 Demonstrate environmental awareness and stewardship.

RESEARCH ON VALUE RUBRICS

In February 2017, the Association of American Colleges and Universities released a research report on the use of its VALUE rubrics. Read the full report [On Solid Ground](#).

RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE FIVE-YEAR REVIEW OF THE NEUMANN UNIVERSITY CORE EXPERIENCE

During development of the Five-Year Program Review, the Core Committee identified a few areas that need immediate attention. These areas include:

Include on all syllabi the Core Learning outcomes and indicate the outcomes emphasized in the course: A review of a sample of syllabi revealed that several syllabi do not include the Core learning outcomes. Furthermore, some syllabi include outcomes that are not the revised Core learning outcomes.

Review syllabi with students and explain the Core learning outcomes: In Focus groups conducted during Spring 2017, several students stated that they understood the Core learning outcomes because faculty members include the outcomes on syllabi and explain the relevance of these outcomes.

Review with students the recommendations offered by [Erik Palmer for oral presentations](#). When the Core program was revised in 2012, the Public Speaking course was eliminated and faculty members agreed to integrate oral communication skills across the curriculum. Erik Palmer provided professional development programs related to oral communication in 2012 and 2015. However, the majority of students who participated in focus groups as part of the Five-Year Core Review recommended the reinstatement of the Public Speaking course. Students stated that most faculty members assign oral presentations but do not discuss the skills necessary to present effectively.

Review the Core learning outcomes and engage in promoting and assessing Core learning outcomes: Surveys revealed that fewer than 50% of faculty members and fewer than 40% of staff members understand the Core philosophy and learning outcomes “Very well,” and only 25% of faculty and 20% of staff members understand the Core assessment plan “Very well.”

CORE CURRICULUM COMMITTEE FOR 2017-2018

Sr. Patricia Hutchison, OSF, **Chair**
Megan Camp
Janelle Ketrick-Gillespie
Jackie Martin
Daniel McKee
Andrew Miller
Kathy Neal
Philip Pegan
Je’Nai Righter
Kathleen Swanik
Robert Till
Sandra Weiss
Hasan Yonten

Lawrence DiPaolo, ex officio

Thank you to outgoing members: Jilian Donnelly and Julie Lanzillo!

