

The Neumann University Core Experience

March 2013

Newsletter

Volume 2, Issue 3

Dear Colleagues,

It is almost impossible to believe that we are entering the final weeks of the Spring semester! We are also nearing the end of the first year of implementation of the revised Core program: *The Neumann University Core Experience*. This newsletter provides information on the progress of the Core Assessment Plan, a summary of professional development related to the revised Core, an introduction to the Core Assessment Plan for 2013-2014, and some important reminders for advisors.

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

Dr. Pat Hutchison, OSF

Core Assessment Plan for 2013-2014

Next year assessment will focus on learning outcomes related to *Contemplation* and *Conscience*. During the coming weeks, the Core Task Force will review the assessment plans, contact faculty members to identify appropriate courses for participation in the assessment process, and develop and share rubrics.

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 you prepare syllabi for the Fall (and as co-curricular areas plan programs), this is a great 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>

Perhaps you could devote a meeting to discuss how you will place special emphasis on *Contemplation* and *Conscience* during the coming year!



Inside this Issue:

Core Assessment Plan for 2013-2014	p.1
Core Assessment 2012-2013: Focus on Communication	p.2
Professional Development Increases Understanding of the Revised Core	pp.3-4
Important Reminders for Advisors as Registration Approaches	p.5

Core Assessment 2012-2013: Focus on Communication

The assessment focus for 2012-2013 has been oral and written communication and information literacy skills. During the Fall semester volunteer faculty and staff members visited nine classes and completed an assessment of the oral communication skills of 51 students. Faculty members also submitted samples of student papers demonstrating achievement in written communication and information literacy. Assessment of oral presentations continue with classroom visits scheduled during the coming weeks. At the end of the semester, faculty members will submit samples of student work products in information literacy and written communication. During a Core assessment week in late May or early June, all written communication and information literacy work products will be assessed.

The Core Task Force will also collaborate with Sr. Janet Thiel and Melissa Thorpe to analyze relevant sections of the ETS Proficiency Profile and student surveys. The Task Force will then engage the Neumann community in conversation to determine how we can best “close the assessment loop” by developing strategies to improve communication skills.

The Core Task Force continues to investigate appropriate expectations for Neumann graduates in the area of technology competencies. This has proven more complex than anticipated. Expect an update from Core Task Force members in the coming weeks.

To review the Core Communication Assessment Plan and related rubrics, please visit the Core Experience website <http://www.neumann.edu/CoreExperience/communication/default.asp>



Professional Development Increases Understanding of the Revised Core

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. On November 15, 2012, 16 faculty members from across the institution gathered to explore the potential and the possibilities of integrating this best practice. Karen Albaugh, assistant professor of Physical Therapy, shared the life-long impact of her undergraduate experience at the University of Scranton, with its Jesuit commitment to forming “men and women for others.” Dr. Albaugh then shared a recent service experience in Haiti, coordinated by one of her professors from the University of Scranton. Marisa Rauscher, assistant professor of Education, described the evolution of a Service-Learning course in education. Dr. Rauscher’s candid explanation of the rewards and the challenges of creating the course and adjusting it over time proved extremely helpful to faculty members.

Use of ETS Proficiency Profile and Student Surveys

On January 15, 2013, Sr. Janet Thiel and Melissa Thorpe presented a profile of Neumann students as reflected in student surveys and the ETS Proficiency Profile which assesses achievement in Writing, Reading and Critical Thinking, and Math. At the end of their presentation, they provided time for faculty members to reflect on how they can use results of the surveys and the ETS Proficiency Profile to foster student engagement and academic achievement. Sr. Janet and Melissa challenged the 31 participants to share what they learned with colleagues in order to deepen the conversation. If you were not able to attend the workshop and wish additional information, contact Sr. Janet Thiel thielj@neumann.edu or Melissa Thorpe thorpem@neumann.edu.

Contemplation and Conscience: Core Focus for 2013-2014

In academic year 2013-2014, the focus of Core assessment will be the learning outcomes related to *Contemplation* and *Conscience*. In anticipation of this focus, the Core Task Force provided professional development programs related to these areas on January 15, 2013. Eighteen faculty and staff members participated in a workshop related to *Conscience*, and 22 faculty and staff took part in the session on *Contemplation*.

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 the text he is publishing on *Catholic Franciscan Ethics*. Finally, the philosophy professors 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. The hope is that those who

Professional Development Increases Understanding of the Revised Core (continued from page 3)

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.

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 process and then to share if they felt comfortable doing so. 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, inviting coaches 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.

Information Literacy

During the Fall semester Sr. Dorothy Bredehott and Coordinator of Information Literacy, Maureen Williams, collaborated on a pilot project to improve information literacy skills among education majors in two sophomore and junior level courses. Sr. Dorothy and Maureen shared the results with interested faculty members on January 28. Based on student scores and on observational assessment, two specific areas of focus for research assignments were identified:

Class time spent reading and analyzing research articles: Students often read only the abstracts or do not fully understand how to read a research study or scholarly article. Dedicating class time to monitor students as they read and evaluate articles can assist students to engage with the text.

Better incorporation of research into writing: Students find articles, but have trouble merging the research they find with their own words when writing the paper. They often drop quotes into the article without cohesion or fail to mention the article at all, even though their paper is clearly drawn from it. Additional in-class time will be spent assisting students to integrate research into the written papers.

Contact Sr. Dorothy bredehod@neumann.edu or Maureen Williams williamm@neumann.edu for further information.

Important Reminders for Advisors as Registration Approaches

Implementing any new program is never without “bumps in the road.” The Core Task Force consulted with key personnel in other institutions which have recently revised their Core programs and heard one consistent piece of advice: *Expect problems, but stay the course for the first year!* We now have a file with questions and concerns we have received; we will re-evaluate procedures as needed. One of the issues we have identified is an inconsistency in implementing the sequence for the new Core. There is an inner logic to the sequence of courses, 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. In addition, some students who transferred into Neumann in Fall 2012 have been advised under the “old Core.” As registration days approach, please review major program plans.

You may wish to place a copy of the following directives near the computer as your 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 in Fall 2012 or after, 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.