

Dear Colleagues,

In August 2009 the Core Task Force was established and directed to review and begin preliminary conversations leading to a revision of the Neumann University undergraduate core curriculum

Beginning in February 2010 and continuing until the present time, the Task Force has engaged faculty, staff, administrators, and students in discussions about the Core program. We are grateful for the feedback we have received. Over the summer months, we will continue to meet to process questions and concerns. By September 2011, we will submit a proposal to the Faculty Senate Curriculum Committee for a revised Core program to be implemented in August 2012.

We have made every attempt to listen to all the voices which have emerged. We have also educated ourselves about current best practices in undergraduate general education and have studied carefully the programs of more than 25 peer institutions. This newsletter provides the latest revision of the Philosophy, Purpose, and Goal Statements; responses to questions we have received; questions, concerns, and other issues we will address on our upcoming work days; and a history of the ongoing work on the Core since the last revision in 1997-1998. We have also included several suggested readings.

We welcome your continued input as we strive to create a Core program that will serve our students and reflect the best of current scholarship and practice.

Thanks to all who have helped in the preparation of this newsletter, especially the Core Task Force (see last page for members), Dr. Gerard O'Sullivan, Lori Pelleski, and Theresa Huke.

Dr. Pat Hutchins, OSF

Goals

Active engagement in the four components of the NUUE (i.e. Common Ground, Foundational Education, Liberal Arts, and Major/Minor Coursework) will enable Neumann University students/graduates to:

Reflect on the compatibility of faith and reason with specific reference to the Catholic Franciscan intellectual and spiritual tradition and commit to actions consistent with Reverence, Integrity Service, Excellence and Stewardship: **Commit to the Values of Education in the Catholic Franciscan Tradition.**

Participate as ethical human beings, responsible citizens, and emerging leaders in a global community: **Act responsibly within a global community.**

Demonstrate the ability to think creatively, reflectively, and critically: **Think critically.**

Communicate effectively in a variety of ways with different audiences: **Communicate effectively.**

Explore the meaning of self and society through engagement and reflection in the study of the Liberal Arts: **Explore meaning of self and society.**

Accomplish major program outcomes and expectations and confidently pursue a career or further study: **Complete a major program of study.**

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Philosophy

The Neumann University Undergraduate Experience (NUUE) flows directly from the University's mission as a liberal arts university in the Catholic Franciscan tradition. NUUE lies at the heart (*cor*) of the university itself. Rooted in Gospel values, Neumann University affirms the uniqueness and dignity of each person and recognizes that the individual's spiritual, emotional, intellectual, physical, and social attributes complement and fulfill one another. In response to this vision, through the NUUE, the university seeks to empower its students with the knowledge, skills, competencies and values that foster independence and interdependence in learning, that cultivate integration of faith and reason, and that inspire social responsibility. The NUUE is based upon the belief that the campus community unites to educate and support students. As they take part in campus life, students are provided opportunities to engage in aspects of the learning process that further promote responsibility and engagement and expand the breadth and depth of their learning. Neumann University graduates are prepared to be contributing and responsible leaders in their professional lives and in their local and global communities.

Purpose

The purpose of the Neumann University Undergraduate Experience is to provide opportunities for each graduate to:

- Internalize the University's Catholic Franciscan Mission and Values.
- Acquire foundational knowledge and appreciation of the Liberal Arts
- Integrate learning across all disciplines.
- Engage in experiences that foster learning within and beyond the classroom
- Develop an awareness of Self as a responsible citizen and leader within a global society
- Gain skills to succeed in their career and life planning

History of CORE Revision Process

1997-1998	Revised Core approved (38-41 credits)
1999-2000	Philosophy 102 (Ethics) reintroduced (44 credits)
2002-2003	Eng 102 (Research and Writing) reintroduced (47 credits)
1999-2000	Faculty surveys reveal effectiveness of Core
2000-2001	Faculty study Bloom's taxonomy
2001-2002	Faculty consider Rubrics and identify Core outcomes
2002-2003	Faculty identify teaching strategies and assessment methods used in Core courses
2003-2004	Student and Faculty surveys identify extent to which Core outcomes are achieved
2004-2005	Student and faculty surveys and focus groups examine the impact of the Core program
April 2005	Core Program Review and Recommendations
April 2006	Middle States Visit and Recommendations
August 2009	Core Task Force appointed and directed to review and begin preliminary conversations leading to a revision of the Neumann University undergraduate Core curriculum
February 2010	Core Task Force shares progress and invites feedback at Faculty Senate development program
Oct. – Dec. 2010	Seven all-campus focus groups held to share progress of Task Force and gain feedback. 47 faculty, 22 staff members, and 16 administrators attended at least one session.
Jan. – April 2011	Division and Department meetings held to gain feedback on Core revision
June – Aug. 2011	Task Force meets to address questions and develop proposal for Core revision
September 2011	Task Force will present proposal to Faculty Senate Curriculum Committee
Fall 2012	Revised Core implemented with entering class of undergraduate students

Comments & Suggestions

In addition to the questions to which we can now offer at least partial answers (pages 3-5), there were a number of specific questions and suggestions which will be reviewed in depth by the Core Task Force during their meetings over the summer months. These include:

- Are the terms used to describe the four components (Common Ground, Foundational Education, Liberal Arts, and Major/Minor Integration) confusing?
- Will these terms be understood by students, parents, and other communities of interest?
- Are certain courses misplaced in the proposed schema (e.g. Should Lab Science be a Foundational course rather than a Liberal Arts course)?
- Is the 3-course sequence confusing?
- Could an upper level Philosophy course be permitted in place of an upper level Theology class?
- Some suggested that the Introduction to Philosophy be retained for a variety of reasons (e.g. its potential to promote Critical Analysis and Reasoning, its potential to promote the understanding of the compatibility of faith and reason).
- Some stressed the importance of retaining 6 credits in Philosophy and 6 credits in Theology in keeping with our mis-

- sion as a Catholic university in the Franciscan tradition.
- Could the learning outcomes of INT 202 (Exploring Diversity) be embedded in other courses, rather than in a separate 3-credit course?
- Could the learning outcomes of CA 206 (Oral Communication) be embedded in other courses, rather than in a separate 3-credit course?
- Many respondents felt that if divisions specified different Liberal Arts courses, complications would result when students changed majors.
- Many respondents felt that diminishing the number of Liberal Arts courses was not advisable given the profile of our students and our mission as a Liberal Arts university.
- Several respondents advocated for the inclusion of specific Liberal Arts courses and described how the courses contributed to essential learning outcomes.
- There was a suggestion that INT 101 be changed to a 2 or 3-credit course with additional learning outcomes included.
- The importance of incorporating Service-Learning in the Core was stated.
- What do self-knowledge and self-care mean? How and where will knowledge and competencies be embedded?

Questions & Answers

Questions raised during the feedback sessions were grouped according to common themes. The Core Task Force will address all questions during our summer work sessions. In some cases, the Task Force had already considered the question and responses are offered below.

Preparedness of incoming students:

How can Neumann better prepare students for college-level work?

Do we need a special pre-university program?

Do we need a conditional acceptance process?

Can certain credit-courses be linked to developmental courses?

A pre-university program is needed and is currently in place. Neumann prepares students with developmental learning needs through its PACE and Summer PACE programs, as well as through standard developmental courses (092, 094 and 100). Math 092 was completely redesigned last year, and English 094 (writing) and English 100 (reading) will be redesigned this summer.

Students may be conditionally accepted through the Summer PACE, or Community College PACE Programs. Students in the Summer PACE program are conditionally accepted with rigorous learning contracts. The Summer PACE program serves 20 students with low SATs, low high school GPAs and other risk factors for academic success. Summer PACE students are enrolled in 3 linked courses in the Fall of the First year and 2-3 linked courses in the Spring. During the First year they also receive intensive advising support. There is a need to expand the Summer Pace program beyond 20 students, based on the high retention and graduation rates this program has achieved.

The Community College (CC) PACE program serves students who cannot commute to the university during the summer, but still need to fulfill developmental course work before being fully admitted to the university. The CC Pace group does not benefit from the course linkages and learning communities that the Summer PACE students receive.

In addition to the Summer Pace and Community College Pace programs, Neumann prepares students for college-level work through developmental courses and a PACE program. Students place into developmental courses based on performance on Accuplacer tests. Students scoring 460 or below on either the math and/or verbal SATs need to placement test. A student requiring 2 or more developmental courses in either reading, math and/or writing is enrolled in the PACE program. This allows a student the benefit of special academic advising, developmental course work, academic coaching, and a connection to the Academic Resource Center, usually through the advisor and/or course instructors. In the 2009-2010 academic year, 120 students participated in the regular PACE program.

Credit-bearing courses are now linked with developmental courses through the Learning Communities initiative funded by Title III. In fall 2011, six English 100 (developmental reading) courses will be linked with credit-bearing courses. The linkages are as follows: English 100/Theo 104, Eng 100/Psych 101, Eng

100/Hist 103. These paired courses expand on the linked courses Summer PACE students have participated in over the last 5 years which have been extremely successful.

VALUE Rubrics:

What are the VALUE rubrics and how will they be used and assessed?

VALUE is an acronym for Valid Assessment of Learning in Undergraduate Education. The Office of the Assistant Vice President for Academic Affairs has distributed more than 75 copies of the AAC&U publication which explains VALUE rubrics and offers tips and tools for using the rubrics. The Core Task Force will be adapting the rubrics for use within Neumann University. The Task Force is aware that the requirements of accrediting bodies will need to be respected in the application of the VALUE rubrics. There will be multiple professional development opportunities offered relevant to the VALUE rubrics. These will include presentations by faculty members from peer institutions who have used the rubrics and possibly from the staff of AAC&U. In addition, Sr. Janet Thiel will offer workshops on the use of the rubrics. Please visit the website of the Association of American Colleges and Universities – <http://www.aacu.org/value/index.cfm> – for additional information on the VALUE rubrics.

Common Ground (CG) themes

How can the CG themes be integrated into 100, 200, 300, and 400 level courses?

Several respondents questioned the placement of the CG themes (e.g. several felt that career development and leadership should be introduced earlier and then re-visited frequently).

Some respondents raised questions about the intention of certain themes (e.g. how do you reflect on “meaning-making”?)

The Core Task Force will review the placement of the themes based on feedback. Recommendations and resources on how to integrate the themes are being developed.

Determining Competency

How will “college-level competency” be assessed? Who will assess? What will happen when students do not meet “competency”?

What process will be used to determine that a student has or can meet competency requirements in an alternate way (i.e. not through a designated 3-credit course)?

College-level competency is determined through rigorous grading based upon clear assessment rubrics which are consistent across sections of multi-section courses. If students do not meet competency they will not progress. In some instances, core competencies may be embedded in alternate courses, as has been the case with the revised Education curriculum under Chapter 49.2.

Undergraduate Research

What is meant by “undergraduate research”?

Is there an expectation that students conduct empirical research?

Questions & Answers (continued)

Undergraduate research is considered a best practice in undergraduate education. For more on the topic, please visit : http://www.aacu.org/peerreview/pr-sp10/pr-sp10_Lopatto.cfm and http://www.aacu.org/meetings/undergraduate_research/2010/resources.cfm

Articles and podcasts are available at both websites.

Majors may interpret undergraduate research differently. Some may emphasize enabling students to access and interpret research in practice. Other majors may promote engagement in various types of qualitative and quantitative research. A review of the current Neumann University catalog confirmed that most majors already include some type of research course in their program.

The Council on Undergraduate Research (CUR) defines undergraduate research as follows: "An inquiry or investigation conducted by an undergraduate student that makes an original intellectual or creative contribution to the discipline." In certain disciplines, such as the sciences and the social and behavioral sciences, students may be expected to engage in empirical research.

Professional Development

How will faculty (including adjunct faculty) know how to implement the Core revision?

How will faculty and staff know how to integrate the various themes in CG?

How will faculty learn about the services offered through the co-curriculum?

How will co-curricular areas develop an understanding of the revised Core and how they can support the Core goals and learning outcomes?

What preparation is needed for advisors to understand the critical role they will have in fostering among students an understanding of the value of the revised Core?

The Core Task Force has identified, as a priority, professional development for faculty and staff members who will be engaged in supporting the philosophy, purpose, and goals of the revised Core. There will be on-going development offered in on-line and face-to-face formats.

Lori Pellescki has offered to provide a presentation on the various developmental support services available for students. **In conjunction with the Faculty Senate Development Committee, there will be an afternoon workshop from 1 to 4 PM on August 24, 2011. One of the speakers is a national expert on developmental education:**

David C. Caverly, Ph.D.
Professor, Dept. of Curriculum and Instruction
Texas State University - San Marcos
<http://www.education.txstate.edu/ci/people/faculty/Caverly.html>

With the implementation of the revised Core program, the role of the academic advisor will become even more critical. Therefore, Advisors are encouraged to participate in one of the summer

workshops offered through the Academic Advising Center. This summer the workshop dates are **June 10 and 11**. This two day workshop offers both theoretical foundations and practical strategies for working with students while applying developmental concepts in advising. The Title III grant offers full time faculty a \$200 per day stipend for attending the workshop. Participants must attend both days and be available for the entire day, from 9 AM to 4 PM.

The University designed the Title III grant so that all faculty advisors would attend the workshop at some point over the five year life of the grant. This will be the third summer that this workshop is being offered. Faculty who attended this workshop over the past two summers are not eligible to attend.

If interested, please RSVP to Lynn Falkowski at falkowsc@neumann.edu as soon as possible, as space is limited (4 openings as of Monday, May 9).

Sequencing of courses and availability of adequate sections of courses

The proposed revision requires that some courses will be taken in a certain sequence and in certain years (e.g. Theology 104 in the first year; Ethics and INT 202 in the second year; etc.)

Will there be an adequate number of sections of each course offered and will the sections be offered at times convenient for all majors, especially those majors which require field and clinical experiences?

Yes. Steps will be taken to ensure that adequate numbers of sections of each course are offered every year, during the fall and spring semesters.

Time provided for reflection and discussion of Core revision

Has sufficient time been provided for research and discussion of the proposed revisions to the Core program?

What evidence do we have that the current Core does not meet the stated Philosophy, Purpose, and Goals?

What evidence do we have that the proposed revision will meet the stated Philosophy, Purpose, and Goals?

Can we take another two years to continue to research and discuss the Core?

Core was last revised in 1997-1998. There was a Core program review in 2005; specific recommendations resulted.

The Middle States Commission on Higher Education review of 2006 included suggestions and recommendations related to the Core program.

The 2010-2014 University strategic plan includes recommendations related to the Core program.

The current Core Task Force was activated in August 2009 with membership from every academic division. Our work included a review of current research on Liberal and General Education and the educational needs of 21st century students.

Questions & Answers (continued)

The Task Force initiated dialog with faculty members in February 2010 and with the entire campus community in August 2010.

The Task Force offered 7 sessions to present its work in October and November of 2010. Task Force members provided multiple opportunities for discussions with open invitations to the entire campus community during Spring 2011.

Appropriate integration of RISES and the Catholic Franciscan Intellectual Tradition

How can the recommended "appropriate integration of RISES and the Catholic Franciscan Intellectual Tradition" be accomplished across the entire university experience?

Is Catholic Social Teaching too narrow a perspective for a University?

Standard 12 on General Education of the Middle States document, *Characteristics of Excellence*, states in the section Fundamental Elements of General Education (p. 48) that institutions must offer "consistent with institutional mission, a program of general education that incorporates study of values, ethics, and diverse perspectives."

The Final Team Report of the Middle States Commission on Higher Education (April 25, 2006) identified the following recommendation related to Mission:

Continue to infuse the Catholic Franciscan intellectual tradition throughout the core curriculum and all academic programs and majors.

Goals I and III and several of the objectives of Neumann University's current strategic plan (2010-2014) directly relate to the appropriate integration of RISES and the Catholic Franciscan Intellectual tradition.

The Association of Catholic Colleges and Universities has published several documents related to Catholic identity.

A United Endeavor

http://www.accunet.org/files/public/A_United_Endeavor.pdf describes a 2009 project related to General Education.

Ongoing conversations related to Catholic Social Teaching and Higher Education produced several documents which may be accessed at

<http://www.accunet.org/i4a/pages/index.cfm?pageid=3614>

Information Literacy

Was Information Literacy omitted as a foundational skill area?

Information Literacy was inadvertently omitted from the Foundational Education component of the NUUE. This omission has been corrected. At present, the Neumann University reference librarians provide classes for all sections of English 101 and 102 and to other classes upon request. With the revised Core, it is anticipated that additional support will be offered to ensure that Information Literacy is properly addressed across the curriculum.

Summer 2011 Priorities

In addition to reviewing all input from the focus groups and addressing the questions, comments and suggestions cited on the previous pages, the Core Task Force will:

- Identify responsibilities of all constituents across the University for implementation of the revised program
- Develop VALUE rubrics for areas not included in AAC&U model
- Identify how transfer students and CAPS students will fulfill the goals and learning outcomes of the Neumann University Undergraduate Experience
- Develop a common understanding of Capstone courses and identify criteria to guide the development of Capstone courses by each major program; it is anticipated that Capstone courses will be a re-design of the current Senior Seminar courses
- Discuss the importance of campus-wide use of digital portfolios
- Develop a process for determining how "alternative" experiences might fulfill Core learning outcomes
- Articulate Learning Outcomes related to each NUUE goal
- Develop a curriculum map to identify courses and experiences in which Core learning outcomes are addressed.

For several good resources on curriculum mapping go to:

http://www.google.com/cse?cx=011623608364967583008%3A1x9o_ojnz28&q=curriculum+map

The Winter 2010 issue of *Peer Review* is especially good and totally on-line.

- Develop a plan for assessing learning outcomes
- Recommend a structure to support the revised Core program
- Develop a business plan which identifies costs (personnel and financial) associated with implementing the Core revision

Recommended Readings

Association of American Colleges and Universities <http://www.aacu.org/index.cfm>

See especially the sections on Liberal Education and General Education.

Several articles and reports are available in full text format. In addition, podcasts and videos are available.

Surveys and Research Reports related to the essential goals of higher education, high impact practices, expectations of employers, etc. are available at

<http://www.aacu.org/resources/liberaleducation/index.cfm>

Please review the entire webpage and download relevant documents.

A United Endeavor: Promising Practices in General Education at Catholic Colleges and Universities, Association of Catholic Colleges and Universities

http://www.accunet.org/files/public/A_United_Endeavor.pdf

Characteristics of Excellence in Higher Education, Middle States Commission on Higher Education

http://www.msche.org/publications/CHX06_Aug08REVMarch09.pdf

Student Learning Assessment, Middle States Commission on Higher Education

http://www.msche.org/publications/SLA_Book_0808080728085320.pdf

The Catholic Intellectual Tradition in the Catholic University – by Monika K. Hellwig

http://www.sacredheart.edu/pages/2525_cit_in_the_catholic_university.cfm

Govert, M. E. (2008). One university's attempt to name the Franciscan charism in higher education. *The AFCU Journal: A Franciscan Perspective on Higher Education*, 5, 93-101.

Ingham, M.B. (2007). Responding from the tradition: Franciscan universities in the third millennium. *The AFCU Journal: A Franciscan Perspective on Higher Education*, 4, 6-18.

N.B. AFCU Journals may be accessed through the website of the Association of Franciscan Colleges and Universities

<http://www.franciscancollegesuniversities.org/>

Core Task Force Members

Chair:	Sr. Patricia Hutchison
Members:	Sr. Dorothy Bredehoft
	Janelle Ketrick-Gillespie
	Claudia Kovach
	John Kruse
	Nancy Laplante
	Mary McCoy
	Arde Shahmaei
	Tish Szymurski
	Sr. Janet Thiel
Staff:	Sr. Mary Ann McCarthy