

## **The Core Proposal**

In keeping with the timeline established for the core revision process, the Core Planning Committee (CPC) presents this proposal for approval to the Academic Assembly of the College of Arts and Sciences, and simultaneously to the School of Business Administration and the Department of Engineering. The proposal will also then be sent to the Senate, Provost, President and Academic Affairs Committee of the Board of Trustees for review. This proposal was informed by four key elements: 1) the traditions of liberal arts and Catholic higher education, which are an indispensable foundation to the ethos of this university; 2) the values and vision articulated in the *Core Action Plan*; 3) the voices of USD faculty and students who participated in the series of open forums, special assemblies, core-revision focused departmental discussion, on-line surveys, and other avenues of feedback; and 4) the research on enhancing student learning and engagement through principles of effective core curricula. The CPC recognizes USD's commitment to the holistic development of the student, both intellectual and moral, as the basis of our Catholic institutional mission, in which the core curriculum serves a foundational role.

The *Core Proposal* begins with a set of general recommendations from the CPC that will launch and inform core revision discussions during the second year. It concludes with an articulation of general principles that have emerged throughout the first year of the revision process.

### **CPC Recommendations**

1. The CPC recommends that next year's Core Planning Committee sponsor targeted discussions regarding each of the general principles articulated below to explore how these might become components in a new core curriculum. It should also consider what additional principles may be needed and how these might be incorporated into the curriculum.
2. The CPC recommends that the Core Planning Committee formed for the second year include a representative from each department. The expansion of membership is intended to preserve the inclusion and engagement of faculty as central to the core revision process. It is expected that members will form multiple working committees to conduct key investigations of core curriculum development.
3. The CPC recommends that an independent committee be formed and tasked with considering how the core will express USD's institutional Catholic identity, ensure engagement with the Catholic Intellectual Tradition in its manifold expressions, both historical and contemporary, and advance the dialogue between faith and reason.
4. The CPC recommends that next year's Core Planning Committee revisit the Undergraduate Goals and Outcomes, which were adopted last year as a working document, in order to reflect new developments and ideas in the Core planning process.
5. The CPC recommends that next year's CPC committee clearly determines what resources and support for faculty are necessary to implement and sustain the new Core. It is essential that these are then provided by the administration.

## Core General Principles

**Multi-disciplinary Clusters.** Student learning is greatly enhanced by broad faculty collaboration across disciplines that will expand teaching and research horizons. Part of the new Core should make use of clusters. These are groups of courses, taught by individual professors but linked together by common themes. Clusters are flexible, and could be designed in order to maximize multiple disciplinary connections while maintaining freedom for students and faculty.

**Breadth Through Distribution.** A liberal arts curriculum asks students to pursue a full array of studies. The new Core should include as its foundation a distribution requirement. The exact size is to be determined, but it should include courses across all four divisions: Arts, Humanities, Social Sciences and Natural Sciences. And it should include: Ethics; second language; abstract reasoning and problem solving. Distribution should also be consistent with the Undergraduate Goals and Outcomes.

**Diversity.** The liberal arts should facilitate the development of critical and reflective knowledge and understanding about difference as a socially constructed set of human relations and value assumptions surrounding local and global questions of culture, power, and historical memory. The new Core should include a strong engagement with global and US diversity, guided by the Diversity Curriculum Committee's *Diversity Curriculum Proposal*.

**Writing.** Writing is a developmental process that must be practiced in multiple settings, and in conjunction with reading and critical thinking. The new Core should include a greater commitment to developmental approaches and to writing across the curriculum.

**Enhanced Components.** A well-rounded student benefits from the perspectives of a core curriculum that allows students to synthesize and reflect upon their curricular experiences. The new Core should have some kind of enhanced component, which may include one or more of these possibilities: experiential learning, community service learning, international study, a capstone, undergraduate research, team teaching, an advanced cluster, or other high impact practices.

**Smaller Core.** Electives that provide flexibility and exploration give vitality to the intellectual habits of mind that are at the heart of the liberal arts. The new Core should therefore be made smaller, while protecting both electives and a rich and varied distribution of requirements.

The principles and recommendations set out in this document, together with the sustained efforts and constructive contributions of faculty, administration, students, and other members of the USD community, should continue the path to a vibrant new Core, one that will support and promote excellence among our students as critically-reflective and ethically-engaged citizens.