

**Report of the Task Force on the
Catholic Intellectual Tradition in the Core Curriculum
University of San Diego
November 1, 2012**

Introduction

Presently, the University of San Diego is in the second year of a process to revise its core curriculum. As part of this process, Provost Julie Sullivan, upon the recommendation of the Core Proposal passed in April 2012 by the College of Arts and Sciences, the School of Business Administration and the Engineering faculty, appointed a task force on the Catholic intellectual tradition in the core curriculum. The Provost's mandate asked the task force to:

1. Develop and articulate a set of general principles to guide the design of USD's core curriculum to ensure that it reflects the Catholic intellectual tradition.
2. Provide a brief rationale explaining why each articulated principle is an important component of the manifestation of the Catholic intellectual tradition in USD's core curriculum.
3. Provide concrete examples with learning outcomes of how each principle could be implemented into the design of the core curriculum.
4. Complete the work of the task force, including a presentation to the Core Planning Committee, by November 1, 2012.

To prepare for our discussions, each member of the task force read a number of essays on the various aspects of the Catholic intellectual tradition, including its rich history and contemporary educative expressions in Catholic universities around the world. Also, two members of the task force attended the jointly sponsored CCTC/CEE daylong workshop on Catholic Identity and the Core Curriculum held on Saturday, September 15th. Further, the task force met weekly, beginning on September 18, 2012, to articulate a number of values central to USD's mission and, thereby, its participation in the Catholic intellectual tradition. In our conversations, we acknowledged that our work would, of course, have resonance with the values expressed by other committees exploring core revision, and we agreed upon several important principles:

1. That the University of San Diego is an independent Roman Catholic University. USD "possesses the institutional autonomy necessary to fulfill its mission and guarantees its members academic freedom, which preserves the rights of both the individual and community in the spirit of truth and the common good" (*Insight*, University of San Diego, 3rd Edition, 2004, p. 10; http://www.sandiego.edu/pdf/insight_pub.pdf).
2. That the Catholic intellectual tradition welcomes the vibrant and creative dialogue between Catholic universities and the leadership of the Church. We recognize that the study of the Church's teachings, characterizes, in part, the Catholic university, and that this endeavor alone does not constitute the whole of the tradition, an expansive and inclusive 2000-year-old conversation about truth, meaning and justice infused throughout all disciplines and departments.

3. That we reaffirm USD's dedication to the classical liberal arts and the values of beauty, truth and goodness, which serve to awaken in each person a desire to transform the world.
4. That the key values, rationales, and curricular suggestions presented below, and the integration they require, belong certainly to students but also to the whole of the faculty, who give shape and life to USD's education. The connection between the liberal arts, the core curriculum and the Catholic intellectual tradition should be made explicit to the University community.
5. That the study of theology and philosophy is a distinguishing characteristic of a Catholic university because these courses offer the opportunity for a disciplined and systematic exploration of life's meaning, training the mind to balance faith and reason. The pursuit of theology and philosophy invites discernment of significant truths about reality, faith, and human existence.

The Catholic intellectual tradition at the University of San Diego includes:

1. *Free Inquiry*

Free inquiry is a fundamental part of the Catholic intellectual tradition. The spirit of free inquiry holds that all university community members, particularly students and faculty, have a right to search for truth and an obligation to respect this search by others. An individual's inquiry may include his or her own original opinion and research as well as the critical examination of other people's opinions and research. Through free inquiry and the search for truth, knowledge achieved through reason and knowledge achieved through faith are both mutually illuminating and equally valid.

The tradition of free inquiry should permeate the entire curriculum. It is not specific to any one course, but should be encouraged within all classes taught at USD. Faculty, staff and administration must lead by example so that students know by our actions that free inquiry is a valued part of the Catholic intellectual tradition.

2. *Ethics*

The Catholic intellectual tradition, in its richness, emphasizes the development of ethical judgment and action for a fulfilling human life and offers its own substantive moral outlook and moral principles. It also invites broader inquiry as to the foundations of morality, ethical principles, and application of such principles through reasoned reflection. Ethical inquiry, action and judgment are necessary components of a flourishing human life. As such, students should be required to take courses that develop their understanding of, and ability to critically engage with, competing ethical theories. Such courses should invite students to reflect upon the foundations of moral principles, develop their understanding of a variety of ethical systems, and prepare them to apply such theories to complex, practical issues, understanding the various implications and consequences of particular decisions.

The kind of breath and depth that the Catholic intellectual tradition encourages and facilitates for ethical inquiry, judgment, and action entails that the education provided does not simply reduce ethics to technical or professional training. Disciplines that prepare students for

engagement with, and reasoned reflection upon, morality in all of life are uniquely suited to provide for this endeavor.

3. *Social Justice*

Social justice is an integral part of the Catholic intellectual tradition and central to Catholic social thought. Within this tradition social justice includes, but is not limited to, issues surrounding poverty, dignity of the human person, dignity of work, solidarity and the common good, and care for God’s creation. In particular, USD’s strong, pioneering, and lasting commitment to community service-learning is a strength of the institution, embodies our mission, and fits with this aspect of the Catholic intellectual tradition. At USD, students and faculty value how groups acknowledge differences and navigate towards peace. The Catholic intellectual tradition also has an overall sense that life has hope and meaning.

4. *Diversity*

The free and open discussion of a range of intellectual and cultural traditions, the plights of the poor and marginalized groups, and inherent dignity of each person are an integral part of the Catholic intellectual tradition and necessary to foster an informed appreciation of the diversity of experiences and perspectives. A curriculum inspired by the Catholic intellectual tradition should seek to accomplish these objectives by “helping students to see more than through one’s limited experience – by seeing through other people’s eyes, other people from other times in history, from other cultures and societies and other types of experiences.” [Hellwig, 2010] Indeed, this sort of engagement within and outside the community has enriched the Catholic intellectual tradition and the search for truth, as the Catholic community in America and around the world better understands its own intellectual, cultural, and ethnic diversity.

Building on these elements of the Catholic intellectual tradition and a focus on the liberal arts that stands at its center, USD’s new core curriculum should encourage students to take an integrated approach to critical thinking by considering and reconciling diverse modes of thinking from different disciplinary perspectives on topics that are crucial to intellectual development and world citizenship.

5. *Community*

The Catholic intellectual tradition at USD promotes catholicity on many levels. The University is made up of countless components; we seek to build from this diversity a single, cohesive community of scholars. To that end, the core curriculum should encourage close professional relationships among students and faculty, and encourage communication and cooperation across traditional academic lines. It should work to connect students and faculty across disciplines, among different departments, and between the college and the schools, to reinforce the understanding that the university’s many parts are interconnected components of a common enterprise. The core curriculum should also encourage students and faculty of different faiths, backgrounds, cultures, and experiences to join together as an inclusive and welcoming scholarly community.

The Catholic intellectual tradition promotes the development and growth of community by fostering mutual understanding, tolerance, acceptance and respect among groups and individuals, both on campus and in the larger community beyond. A sense of community is promoted within and throughout the university, and its local, national, and international surroundings. The

establishment of personal and institutional connections enables the growth and maintenance of community on each of these levels. An aspect of nurturing this web of connections includes promoting throughout the University the value of rendering service to the community.

6. *Integration of Knowledge*

The Catholic intellectual tradition sees meaning in the world. We are invited to understand and integrate the true and the good for both the development of moral agency and to perceive the infusion of the divine in reality and knowledge. The Catholic intellectual tradition affirms that human beings are endowed with reason and have the ability to approach truth and meaning through rigorous intellectual activity. It holds that striving towards truth and understanding must be informed by a variety of different disciplines, experiences, and approaches. Finally, it emphasizes the comprehensive nature of truth and the fundamental interconnectedness of knowledge.

Learning is especially meaningful when comprehensive questions are posed and addressed from a variety of approaches. The Catholic intellectual tradition holds that skills, insights, and knowledge gained in one area of life or scholarly inquiry can fruitfully inform quests for answers in another and that learning and the search for truth, therefore, is a continuous process of making connections.

The Catholic intellectual tradition thus supports an integrative curriculum that asks students and faculty to connect across disciplines, to synthesize disparate areas of knowledge, and to pose the "big questions." It thus also supports core curricula whose components connect and build on one another, in which latest advances in research are integrated into the quest for understanding, and in which a continuous engagement with the complex problems of our world inform the questions we ask and the answers we seek.

7. *Intellectual Rigor*

The Catholic intellectual tradition centers on the belief that thinking, serious sustained intellectual reflection, is essential to our lives. In higher education, the Catholic intellectual tradition embodies and embraces the work of those who seek to push forward the boundaries of knowledge. First and foremost, the faculty must be committed to the rigorous pursuit of excellence in teaching, learning, and research.

Accomplishing intellectual rigor in a liberal arts curriculum includes, but is not limited to, exposing students to rich bodies of literature, relevant coursework and engaging discussions to stimulate intellectual inquiry. Faculty must impose high academic standards that sharpen critical thinking and analytical reasoning, and increase advanced competency skills in writing, oral communication, cognitive reasoning and technological literacy. Students so educated must be well equipped to creatively envision, articulate and apply new solutions to the problems of today.

A rigorous and purposeful curriculum aims to challenge students to evaluate their existing assumptions by exposing them to new ideas. Courses necessarily must be intense and demanding, both in breadth and depth of coverage of topics. A rigorous curriculum awakens and stimulates in the student a desire to explore, to experiment, to reason, and to transform not only themselves but also the world around them as they discern their own place in it.

Curricular Suggestions

- The Catholic intellectual tradition should not be reserved exclusively for the core curriculum; it should be infused throughout the students' experience including within the major.
- Curriculum and resource support should be allocated to build new bridges among the various College departments, and between the College and the different schools.
- The core curriculum should provide students the opportunity to engage with the Catholic intellectual tradition. Core courses and coursework should interact with and reinforce the range of key values associated with the Catholic intellectual tradition.
- A developmental approach may be used to incorporate the Catholic intellectual tradition throughout the students' experience. At the introductory level, students may be exposed to informative lessons about the key values, for example social justice and ethics. Later in their academic path, students engage in experiences that would reinforce these ideas with action. For example, students could engage in a service project, undergraduate research, or an international experience.
- The well-designed core curriculum could be a powerful mechanism by which to instill in students the value of social justice throughout their lives, facilitating a desire to “convert ethical principles into voluntary, extracurricular service.” [Dupré, 2000] Curricular possibilities include incorporating community service-learning projects on diversity and inclusion, power and privilege.
- We recommend an integrated, interdisciplinary learning experience to foster and encourage students' increased appreciation for intellectual and cultural diversity and the difficulties facing poor and marginalized groups within the US and throughout the world.
- The Living Learning Communities are an important part of making connections and building community, and should be designed with these ends in mind.
- Community service learning and other experiential educational opportunities, both on and off campus, help to strengthen the community at USD, and link the University to the larger communities in the greater San Diego area and the international border region.
- The core curriculum can encourage interdisciplinary community building and integration of knowledge by creating more linked courses, cluster courses, team-taught courses, and other ways to encourage students and faculty to think beyond traditional disciplinary and departmental divisions.
- In teaching and advising, faculty should be mindful of our mission and its contribution to the Catholic intellectual tradition in order to build an inclusive campus community, and to help students connect in various ways to the University and to the larger communities beyond.

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Respectfully submitted by the Catholic Intellectual Tradition and the Core Task Force:

Tom Barton, Department of History
Tom Dalton, Accounting
Del Dickson, Department of Political Science and International Relations
Tammy Dwyer, Department of Chemistry and Biochemistry
Florence Gillman, Department of Theology and Religious Studies
Mary Hotz, Department of English
Susan Lord, Engineering
Kristin Moran, Department of Communication Studies
Clara Oberle, Department of History
Lori Watson, Department of Philosophy