

Core Proposal Revision Discussion – Core Planning Committee & Subcommittees

March 25, 2014

12:15-2:00 p.m., Serra 204

Members of the CPC and CPC subcommittees convened to discuss feedback on the core proposal. CPC Chair Kristin Moran welcomed everyone to the meeting and reminded them to attend the next CPC meeting on Tuesday, April 22, 12:15-2 p.m. in Serra 204.

Feedback of many kinds has been coming in since the report was shared at Academic Assembly in February. Feedback has been distributed and shared among the CPC and CPC Steering committees. Moran projected a few Power Point slides to give a “big picture” view of how the core is being put together and how it has changed over the last month.

Overview of Model

Broadly speaking, the model shows three content areas plus core competencies:

1. Catholic identity
 - a. Catholic Intellectual Tradition (CIT) – THRS, Philosophy, and Ethics
 - b. Diversity, Inclusion, and Social Justice
2. Integrative learning – thematic LLCs
3. Exploring liberal arts – six breadth categories
4. Core competencies

Flagging of courses throughout the curriculum has been removed, except where noted below.

Integration

Integration refers to the intentional establishment and teaching/learning of connections between classes and across disciplines within an LLC theme. The one-unit integration component add-on to the fall LLC preceptorial and spring companion course has been eliminated. Instead, the current fall preceptorials would comprise four units each. Preceptorials such as calculus, already at four units, would likely increase to five units. Spring companion courses, satisfying another area of the core, would also become 4 (or five) units. Four unit courses meet four hours per week. There is no requirement that all faculty must meet at once, but LLC themed courses scheduled at the same time would allow the LLC director and/or faculty to organize events and lectures together. The Spring companion course would allow students to apply in a hands-on what they learned in the fall. Faculty in each themed LLC would determine what kind of final project would be required of their students.

For example, students could participate in a poster session or other kind of showcase at the end of the year to demonstrate integrative learning from their LLC thematic experiences, lectures, and activities. Some professors are already doing this option. LLC learning goals now include “integrative learning.”

This newer core model is designed to help make connections between classes within the core as well as the LLCs. USD Surveys indicate that students do not sense that connections are currently being made between classes or among disciplines, though faculty say they are making connections. Some faculty see the drive to new core modeling or revision as part of a national conversation indicating that faculty sense they are losing self-governance regarding curriculum design. The additional unit for the LLC and companion course will hopefully help faculty make stronger connections between and among classes.

What if a student fails or drops an LLC or companion course? How would they receive the integrative experience of these courses? Mike Williams explained that failing or dropping an LLC integration and/or an integration companion course would be like failing or dropping any other course. Students who fail or withdraw could retake the preceptorial or enroll in a transfer preceptorial. This could mean sophmores may be in a freshman preceptorial, but it is not clear exactly how these types of situations would be handled or implemented; it will be determined as the new model is piloted. Assessment of students who fail or withdraw would be impacted.

What if the thematic course is not Economics, for example? If an additional unit is required and there are nine sections of Econ, an additional FT, tenure-track faculty member would be needed to help teach these classes.

Others asked that if the LLCs were initially designed for integration, and now an additional unit is being required, why add a unit to LLC courses that are not currently succeeding with integration to begin with? Does this condition not create an even higher work load? Williams explained that the LLCs would gradually assimilate integration thematically *and* curricularly. The LLCs will need to be more intentional and clear in their vision and expectations for integration and its application in class and between and among classes.

Foundations

Foundational courses have now separated out diversity, inclusion and social justice from CIT, which was an idea adopted from last year's "Catholic Intellectual Tradition in the Core" document dated December 2, 2013. CIT would now include two courses in THRS, one course in Philosophy, and one course in Ethics.

What was formerly referred to as Inclusion and Social Justice (ISJ), has expanded its scope to include diversity, inclusion and social justice (DISJ), which is now separate from CIT (noting that social justice is a "key pillar" of CIT and that THRS courses could still teach inclusion and diversity). Students would take two flagged courses within the core or major, in courses about or emphasizing diversity, inclusion, and social justice. At least one of the DISJ courses must be from a domestic standpoint. DISJ courses could be taken in the core and/or major.

There has been discussion on whether to remove the domestic requirement because of USD's strategic direction for global competency, but it was decided to include one course emphasis in domestic issues of DISJ and one course emphasis in international issues of DISJ within a developmental framework. Courses that could be considered DISJ include courses in gender and sexual orientation. A recent four-course cluster on sexual orientation included common learning goals and experiences and integrative learning. Assessment of this cluster was successful in finding that students who took this cluster said their learning and perception improved and changed. Development of this cluster, however, was not supported by stipend. The provost and administration will need to support development of these endeavors.

Questions raised to be considered regarding DISJ:

- Who will teach DISJ? Those with expertise? How might competency be developed in faculty without expertise to teach diversity?
- If diversity is too broadly defined in DISJ courses, what will students learn and will they learn less than they could if it was specified?
- Currently some "D" courses are more successful in teaching inclusion and diversity than others. The "D" course has failed in many ways among some students
- What DISJ learning is expected of students here and now and what will be expected of them after they graduate? How do students prepare?
- How will study abroad experiences be affected by DISJ learning outcomes?

Committee structure to approve such courses would expand to include three committees: DISJ, Ethics and Philosophical inquiry, and Theological and Religious inquiry.

It was emphasized that core learning outcomes should be clearly articulated and that departments are held accountable to them; this emphasis is now in the revised version of the full report.

Explorations

Students would take five courses from six areas. One course in each area would be taken in artistic inquiry, scientific inquiry, and social and behavioral inquiry. Scientific inquiry requires one course, a lab course only, instead of a lab and a non-lab course.

Historical and literary inquiries are now separated out and would be taught by a smaller number of departments than what is taught by departments in the other inquiry areas.

A new area was added, technological inquiry. Technological courses would include design and applied forms of science, such as engineering and computer science. Students would take two area courses from three options: historical inquiry, literary inquiry, and technological inquiry.

There is some concern that non-science students would be able to avoid taking the technological course and that science, math, or technological-minded students would take the technology inquiry course and miss out on either a historical or literary inquiry course. Should six courses be required, one from each area? Should humanities students be required to take either a mathematical reasoning/problem solving course or a technological course—do they have to take both? It could also be asked whether humanities students need to take a science course.

Some faculty dislike calling the inquiry “technological” because it is too narrowly defined. Others see how technology might be taught within another disciplines.

Core Competencies and Final Year Experience

Core competencies would be embedded in foundational first year courses and the final year experience. Students would be required to take a stand-alone writing course and a stand-alone mathematical reasoning/problem solving course during the first year; 1-3 courses of second language depending on placement exam or AP credit; and a final year experience. A quantitative reasoning exam would be taken by the end of sophomore year; students who fail the exam would take a QR flagged course. Committee discussion determined that QR and mathematical reasoning/problem solving are separate competencies. A QR course could be taught across disciplines.

Flagging competencies of intermediate level courses have been removed. Competencies would be specified in the foundational and capstone/final year experience level. But how will development of competencies be insured in mid-level courses?

Discussion continues on what to name the final year experience. Some departments do not offer “capstones.” Some faculty dislike the term. Whatever it is to be called, the final year experience would incorporate advanced levels of the competencies. Note that there are many ways a student may demonstrate higher ability in the competencies for the final year experience: through an already established major-specific capstone, senior project, study, or thesis, research and experimentation, a cluster course, upper division course, community service learning, or by combining any of these options, etc., in the core or in the major. Capstones or some kind of senior project would provide the opportunity to assess or evaluate students as they leave USD.

It was asked why the writing competency, one of the most important competencies across disciplines, has no writing course requirement between the first year and final year experience. This gap is an implementation issue and also problematic because some disciplines, such as mathematics and computer science, do not emphasize traditional writing. It was remarked that first year competencies in writing differ from freshman competencies.

Governance

A senate core committee is proposed, to be comprised of Senate or Senate-appointed members based on Senate ratios of programs with undergraduate courses (CAS, SBA, SOE). This senate core committee would receive reports and recommendations from the six Core Faculty Committees (CSF) and resolve any disputes arising from CSF decisions. CSFs include: integration, breadth, DISJ, ethics & philosophical inquiry, theological & religious inquiry, and competencies. Some asked whether the CSFs would be in conflict with each school’s curriculum committee (CAS UCC, SBA UCC, and SOE UCC).

CSF membership could be by nomination from faculty qualified by interest, pedagogy, and research; nominated members would be elected to 8-10 person committee positions and representation would be across units for each CSF. Each school’s faculty would vote for its representatives. The schools’ university core curriculum committees (UCCs) would send objections to CSF decisions for resolution to the Senate Core Committee. It was acknowledged that workload would be heavy at the beginning. Faculty members would be rotated every two years. Stipends would be built into compensation, or perhaps summer load. Recognize that the implementation phase will be substantial.

There remains some concern about the senate oversight committee and whether CIT curriculum would be academic, from the THRS department, and not be controlled by other entities on campus such as Mission & Ministry, which has happened at other universities. It was reiterated that only faculty will serve on the CSFs, not administrators.

Some people balked at the prospect of ten committees. If there are ten people per committee, that is 100 faculty members; how could this structure be sustainable? How could scheduling not become a major obstacle with so many

people? Some suggested considering one committee or fewer committees. Others remarked that the number of committees could decrease after the first few years of implementation.

Course proposals for approval would not be based on assessment. Whether to *revise the course* would be the case via assessment if the course does not meet its stated learning goals.

Dr. Moran said that based on recommendations given during the meeting, the CPC proposal would undergo another round of revisions. She asked those members assembled if they would support revising the document as recommended: 20 people voted “yes” and 3 people “abstained.” There were zero “no” votes.

The meeting adjourned at 2:03 p.m.