

## **Frequently Asked Questions concerning the Integration component of the Core Proposal**

### **1) Why is academic integration necessary? What are the benefits of academic integration?**

There is an abundance of literature that demonstrates how academic integration is beneficial for students in a number of ways. First, it reinforces the interconnectivity of knowledge and thereby promotes the value of a liberal arts education. Second, it improves their ability to engage in high-level critical thinking and problem solving activities. And finally, there is evidence that employers seek out recent graduates who have the ability to confront complex issues with an interdisciplinary perspective. In addition, a majority of faculty who responded to surveys on integration believed that the Core needed to more effectively provide students with opportunities to link the Core courses (for many of the reasons listed above). As a liberal arts institution, academic integration is a critical component to USD's mission for "preparing leaders dedicated to ethical conduct and compassionate service." For faculty, there will be an opportunity for us to learn more about our colleagues from other disciplines approach issues. Currently, there are few opportunities for this type of interaction (Honors team-taught courses, Summer Bridge Program).

### **2) Will the integration units be rigorous and substantive enough to justify academic credit?**

The faculty will determine the rigor and substance of the integration courses. These will not be courses that are meant to introduce students to college life or provide them with lessons on how to take notes (what are sometimes referred to as University 101 courses). While the CPC has not recommended a particular curriculum for the one-unit courses, we do envision that during the fall and spring semester each faculty member in an LLC would provide at least one lecture with the entire LLC group. It is expected that the content of these lectures will be rigorous and will be related with how a particular discipline addresses intellectual and ethical issues related to the LLC theme.

### **3) Why require three units of integration in the Core?**

The one-unit integration courses are developmental – just like many other aspects of the proposed Core curriculum. The goal of this requirement is that when students graduate from USD that they will be able to address complex problems and issues using a variety of intellectual perspectives and disciplines. While many faculty agree with this goal, we currently have no structure in our Core that provides students with the opportunity to learn the necessary skills to conduct interdisciplinary analysis. In order for students to do this, it is necessary for them to be introduced to the idea of academic integration during their freshman year and have opportunities to practice the skills associated with integration throughout the Core curriculum. After much discussion on

the appropriate number of courses, the Academic Integration Sub-Committee and the CPC, decided that the three unit requirement provides the students with an opportunity to appreciate the interdisciplinary approach (Fall semester), to introduce the students to how different disciplines engage the broader community and the ethical considerations involved (Spring semester), and to allow students integrate and synthesize the knowledge and skills they have acquired from the Core at the upper division level (Junior/Senior Year). This structure allows the students to encounter integration and interdisciplinary approaches in a variety of settings while at USD.

**4) How will faculty be compensated for the additional integration units?**

From the beginning of the process, the faculty has been clear that the additional workload associated with the one-unit integration courses must be compensated. Both the Dean's Office and the Provost's Office have guaranteed that faculty will be provided additional compensation for the increased workload.

**5) Is it logistically possible to find the space and time to meet with the LLC classes once every two weeks?**

The task of the CPC was to produce the best possible Core for the students and for the faculty. We believe that the one-unit integration courses provide the best possible mechanism to accomplish the goals of academic integration. There is no question that accommodations will have to be made to the current schedule of courses to accommodate large classes that meet once every two weeks. At no point during this process, however, has the Dean's Office or the Provost's Office suggested that such changes are not possible. While this is an issue that will need to be addressed in the implementation stage, if it is a component of the Core that the faculty believe is necessary for our students, the necessary changes will be made to accommodate these courses.

**6) Will the integration courses make it more difficult for faculty to focus on the content in the three unit preceptorial course?**

The Academic Integrations Sub-Committee heard from many faculty that it is difficult to complete the required content in the current preceptorial course and that the idea of adding more to this course would only exacerbate this problem. We believe that the one-unit integration course will actually relieve some of the pressure from the preceptorial course since the faculty can rely upon this course to focus on aspects of the LLC theme that they cannot do during the course of the semester. Actually, for faculty that find it difficult to "connect" the preceptorial course to the LLC theme, the one-unit course will make this easier to do.

**7) What happens when a student fails an integration course?**

Similar to the other graduation requirements, if a student fails the integration course, this student will have to retake the course. While it is likely that this will happen, it is likely to only be a handful of students each year that face this predicament. We currently deal with these issues with other required courses and it will be an issue that will be resolved on a case-by-case basis.