

To: Core Planning Committee
From: Academic Integration Subcommittee (Mike Williams, Rae Anderson, Jim Bolender, Tom Dalton, Margaret Leary, Susan Lord, Chris Nayve, Roger Pace, Sandra Sgoutas-Emch, Yi Sun)
Date: November 30, 2013
Re: Revised Academic Integration Report

Academic Integration in the Core

Currently, the Core offers few opportunities for students to integrate their knowledge in an intentional and structured manner. The literature on high impact practices (HIPs) is clear that integration of knowledge is beneficial for students as it provides them an opportunity to address complex issues and to engage in real world problem-solving (Brownell and Swaner 2010). It is central to a liberal arts education and it is a critical component for “preparing leaders dedicated to ethical conduct and compassionate service” (USD Mission Statement).

According to the AACU Integrative Value Rubric, integrative learning is “an understanding and a disposition that a student builds across the curriculum and co-curriculum, from making simple connections among ideas and experiences to synthesizing and transferring learning to new, complex situations within and beyond the campus.” The rubric identifies a developmental model of integration that scaffolds from first year courses and experiences to the upper division level [this rubric is attached to the report].

The committee used this definition of integrative learning, and the goal of a developmental model, as the starting points to frame our discussions and the models outlined below. The definition of integration used in this document is multifaceted and it includes courses and experiences that provide students with opportunities to make connections between disciplines, apply knowledge in a variety of contexts, make connections between curricular and co-curricular activities, and to synthesize Core competencies.

Three-Unit Integration Requirement

The committee recommends that the Core should require all incoming freshman students to complete three units of “integration” in the Core and that transfer students should be required to complete two units of the integration. As explained in more detail below, incoming freshmen will complete two units of the integration requirement through a first year seminar course offered in the fall and spring semesters. The third unit of the integration requirement will be met with the completion of a Core Advanced Integration Project.

Transfer students will complete one unit of the integration requirement in their first semester at USD through a transfer seminar course and the second unit of integration will be completed with participation in the Core Capstone course/experience.

An Interdisciplinary and Developmental Model of Integration

The fourth goal of USD’s Undergraduate Learning Goals and Outcomes requires that students “integrate patterns of learning.” Further, students should “develop the ability to

synthesize disparate areas of knowledge and courses of study through individual and collaborative learning.” The learning outcome associated with the goal is “synthesis of core curriculum outcomes.”

In other words, students must be provided with opportunities to understand how their Core classes are connected and taught to appreciate the value of interdisciplinary approaches to issues. This appreciation and awareness of the how different disciplines ask questions, develop and apply theory, and seek to solve real-world problems is a central aspect of the type of the liberal arts education we offer at USD. The committee recommends, however, that students should also be provided with the opportunity to apply what they have learned in a developmental model that would conclude with the Core Advanced Integration Project. The committee utilized the AACU Integrative Value Rubric as a framework to understand how students should develop an appreciation of academic integration during their college experience and it influenced the structure and goals of the integration model recommended in this report.

The model described in this report has the following components:

- 1) First Year Integration Seminar:** The committee recommends a first year integration seminar for all incoming freshman (one unit in the fall semester and one unit in the spring semester) [two units total] and a transfer integration seminar requirement for all transfer students (one unit).
- 2) LLC Cohort Courses:** The committee recommends the creation of LLC cohort classes in the spring semester. These classes will provide an opportunity for students to link their LLC course in the fall semester with one in the spring semester.
- 3) Advanced Integration Project:** The committee recommends the establishment of a Core Advanced Integration requirement for all students (1-3 units).

While the committee does not include an intermediate integration experience in this report, it believes that this is something that the CPC should consider as it discusses the reports from the other committees. The committee discussed how an intermediate integration experience could be offered in a manner that would allow for innovative approaches that might correspond to the goals of the CIT, Breadth, and Competencies subcommittees.

First Year Integration Seminar Fall Semester (1 unit course)

The committee believes that it is important to achieve academic integration in the fall semester amongst the courses offered in each LLC theme. Currently, even though students are located in one of nine distinct themes, there are few opportunities for students to appreciate the integration of the curriculum offered in each theme. Surveys indicate that students in the living learning communities are more likely to feel part of the USD community and that the co-curricular events enable students to socialize with their peers (Fall 2012 Preceptorial Survey). What is missing, however, are mechanisms that integrate the curriculum itself. The one-unit first year seminar course in the fall semester will enable students to understand the interdisciplinary nature of the LLC and provide a basic introduction to the ways in which different disciplines approach issues, frame questions, and solve problems. The committee believes that this seminar is critical to enhancing the LLC

intellectual experience and to making more intentional academic connections with the LLC themes.

How the Fall First Year Integration Seminar Works

- During the fall semester, there would be a one-unit course that would provide students an opportunity to see how different courses within their LLC theme integrate issues, questions, and concepts.
- The one unit would correlate with the LLC course in the fall semester.
- The one unit course could meet once every two weeks for two hours.
- The students could meet as one large group (all of the students in the theme), or if there are no spaces large enough to accommodate the entire theme, they could meet in two groups.
- The faculty director of the LLC will consult with the faculty in her/his theme to discuss ways to achieve integration. The academic topic of the seminar could vary based on the theme or there could be one common approach for all of the LLC themes (for example, a single case study, a common book, or a common concept such as citizenship/civic engagement).
- The course could be structured to allow one hour of lecture and one hour of breakout sessions. Each faculty member in the LLC theme would be responsible for doing a lecture once during the semester.
- The students could also take part in events on or off campus during the time slot it was offered.
- There would be a common assignment and/or assessment project that all of the students would do in each LLC.
- There could be a focus on one of the competencies in this one unit course. For example, the fall semester might focus on writing and could provide an important writing diagnostic for identifying students that need more intensive writing training. The committee discussed the possibility of having upperclassmen serve as Writing Assistants.

Learning Outcomes

The learning outcomes for the Fall First Year Integration Seminar are:

- 1) Identifies connections between academic and co-curricular experiences in the context of the LLC theme
- 2) Recognizes differences in theories and perspectives between academic disciplines related to LLC theme

First Year Integration Seminar Spring Semester (1 unit course)

In the spring semester, students should continue to examine issues related to their LLC theme. As in the fall semester, students will enroll in a one-unit integration seminar that will meet once every two weeks for two hours. Ideally, faculty might offer their same fall

semester course in the spring as a “cohort class” but this does not have to be the case. The committee recommends the theme of this one unit seminar could be aligned around the following title: Citizenship, Service, and Community. Each faculty member would provide one lecture to the students in the same LLC theme that would focus on how his/her particular discipline engages the broader public. More specifically, the seminar should focus on the ways different disciplines engage the community, the ethical considerations involved, and the responsibilities that faculty in different disciplines have to the public more broadly. The committee believes this might be a nice fit with a CIT course or an ethics course. This seminar would also provide students with at least one "field experience" where they would visit a community site where USD engages in community service learning.

How the Spring First Year Integration Seminar Works

- In the spring semester, students would be required to take a one unit Integration Seminar that would relate to the LLC theme
- The one unit course could meet once every two weeks for two hours.
- The students could meet as one large group (all of the students in the theme), or if there are no spaces large enough to accommodate the entire theme, they could meet in two groups.
- The emphasis for the spring semester first year integration seminar would be on learning about how different academic disciplines engage the broader public and San Diego community and service-learning opportunities.
- Students would be expected to apply what they were learning in the classroom to off-campus site visits.
- The course could be structured to allow one hour of lecture and one hour of breakout sessions. Each faculty member in the LLC theme would be responsible for doing a lecture once during the semester.
- There would be a final project at the end of the spring semester that would demonstrate how students integrated the knowledge from their fall and spring courses as well as the first year seminar.

Learning Outcomes

The learning outcomes for the Spring First Year Integration Seminar are:

- 1) Compares co-curricular experiences and academic knowledge to infer differences, as well as similarities, and acknowledge perspectives other than one's own
- 2) Recognizes how a variety of academic disciplines relate knowledge and ethical considerations to broader community issues related to the LLC theme
- 3) Provides evidence of experience in civic engagement activities (such as, community service learning activities) and describes what she/he has learned about her or himself as it relates to a growing sense of civic identity and commitment.

Transfer Integration Seminar Fall or Spring Semester (1 unit course)

How the Transfer Integration Seminar Works

- During the fall semester, there would be a one-unit course that would provide transfer students an opportunity to see how the different disciplines understand issues, frame questions, and solve problems.
- The one unit would be attached to the transfer preceptorial course that the student is enrolled or it could be a stand alone seminar that all transfer students are required to take.
- The one unit course could meet once every two weeks for two hours.
- The transfer students could meet as one large group (all of the students in the theme), or if there are no spaces large enough to accommodate the entire theme, they could meet in two groups.
- The academic topic of the course could vary or there could be one theme that the transfer preceptorial faculty could decide to focus on.
- The course could be structured to allow one hour of lecture and one hour of breakout sessions. Each faculty member teaching a transfer preceptorial course would be responsible for doing a lecture once during the semester.
- The students could also take part in events on or off campus during the time slot it was offered.
- There would be a common assignment and/or assessment project that all of the transfer students would complete.

Advantages of First Year/Transfer Integration Seminars

- Currently, there are very few links made between the different classes in each LLC. The committee believes this is a missed opportunity for students to see the importance of interdisciplinary approaches to common issues. Providing a one-unit seminar each semester that makes these links explicit would allow the students to understand how others in their LLC are approaching these common issues and questions. For faculty, it would provide for a unique, and powerful, type of professional development, as we would learn how our colleagues approach different concepts and questions.
- During the spring semester, the students could apply what they had learned in the fall semester and take part in more activities off campus (community based learning) so that they can more systematically apply their knowledge.

2) LLC Cohort Classes (Spring Semester)

The committee recommends that freshman students be required to enroll in an LLC cohort class in the spring semester that relates to the LLC theme. The cohort courses could be a mix of courses that were offered in the fall semester LLC and new courses that focus on special topics that are related to the LLC theme.

How the LLC Cohort Class Works:

- Students would be required to enroll in at least one cohort class in the spring semester. The student must enroll in a class that is from a different discipline than

his/her preceptorial course in the fall. If resources are available, there should be flexibility to offer team-taught courses.

- The LLC cohort class would be a 3-unit course and faculty who teach this course would be required to take part in the spring first year integration seminar described above.
- The LLC cohort class would have an enrollment of 30 students.
- It would be linked to the LLC theme that the student joined in the fall semester.
- It would satisfy one of the other Core requirements.

The Goals of the LLC Cohort Class

The committee believes that the LLCs offer a unique opportunity for students to make linkages across disciplines and through co-curricular activities. While the first year seminar in the fall semester introduces the students to the idea of interdisciplinary approaches, the cohort class would provide another opportunity for students to think more concretely about interdisciplinary approaches. In terms of the developmental model of integration that this committee recommends, it is vital for students to continue to make linkages in the spring semester. Depending on the types of courses that are offered as LLC cohort classes, there is an opportunity for students to address learning goals related to writing, civic engagement, and ethical and moral reasoning.

Advantages of the LLC Cohort Class

- It provides another opportunity for students to make linkages to the LLC theme.
- It provides a mechanism to continue the one unit seminar in the spring semester.
- It offers the opportunity for students complete a first year assignment/project that would highlight integration as well as the importance of the culture of inquiry at USD. For example, a public presentation at the end of the freshman year might make students more likely to seek out similar opportunities within their major.

3) Advanced Integration Project

The committee recommends that all USD students complete a Core Advanced Integration Project during their junior or senior year. The Advanced Integration Project would provide an opportunity for students to develop their integrative understanding and skills – consistent with the goals of an integrative developmental model.

The committee recommends that the CPC consider three different alternatives for the Core Advanced Integration Project requirement: 1) an advanced integration project that can be fulfilled within the major; 2) an advanced integration project that is outside of the major and requires students to apply an interdisciplinary approach to address a complex issue in the community; and 3) an advanced integration project that is offered as a component of an upper-division cluster that requires students to complete a common assignment or project. The advanced integration project would serve as a vehicle for students to demonstrate their ability to make connections between the disciplines and connections between academic knowledge and outside the classroom experiences.

How the Advanced Integration Project Within the Major Works:

- Students are required to complete 1-3 units of a Core Advanced Integration Project.
- This requirement could be fulfilled if students complete a capstone course/experience in their major but this major-based capstone course/experience would have to meet the learning outcomes for the Advanced Integration Project. There should be enough flexibility so that this requirement can be met through internship, community service-learning, research, e-portfolios or other models as long as students are synthesizing and applying their knowledge and experiences.
- Faculty and the Office of Community Service-Learning would be a resource for departments that want to design more interdisciplinary capstones.
- Students would be required to make a public presentation of their Advanced Integration Project.
- For students who are in majors that do not have a capstone course/experience (or students who want another capstone experience), they would enroll in an alternative Core Advanced Integration Project (described below).

How the Core Advanced Integration Project Outside of the Major Works:

- Students are required to complete 1-3 units of a Core Advanced Integration Project.
- Students enroll in a 1-3 unit course that requires them to collaborate with students and faculty outside of their disciplines to address a complex issue in the community.
- Faculty and the Office of Community Service-Learning would coordinate this course/experience.
- Students would be required to make a public presentation of their Advanced Integration Project.

How the Core Advanced Integration Project Within an Upper-Division Cluster Works:

- Students are required to complete 1-3 units of a Core Advanced Integration Project.
- During the junior or senior year, students will enroll in a course that is part of a cluster of courses (possibly 3-4 separate courses).
- Each course in the cluster would be worth 4-5 units. 3-4 units would be devoted to course content that would fulfill another Core requirement or a major requirement, while one unit would be devoted to an interdisciplinary project-based seminar experience that all students in the cluster would participate in. Students from each of the cluster courses would work together in interdisciplinary teams to complete a project that demonstrates the integration goals described above.
- An alternative approach to the one unit team project is to have all students in the cluster complete common assignments/projects that would link the cluster of courses.
- Students would be required to make a public presentation of their Advanced Integration Project.

The Goals and Learning Outcomes of the Core Advanced Integration Project

The Core Advanced Integration Project is critical for a developmental model of integration. Given the emphasis of introducing integration during the freshman year, it is critical that students have opportunities to build on and develop their integration skills and understanding as they progress through the Core. The Core Advanced Integration Project provides an opportunity to evaluate how well students have learned to integrate and synthesize knowledge during their time at USD. The Core Advanced Integration Project will also provide an opportunity for students to integrate Core competencies.

Learning Outcomes

The learning outcomes for the Advanced Integration Project are:

- 1) Analyzes a complex issue in a way that incorporates examples, facts or theories from more than one field of study or perspective
- 2) Synthesizes connections among experiences outside of the formal classroom (including community service learning, internships, study abroad, research) to deepen understanding of field of study and to broaden own points of view

Advantages of the Core Advanced Integration Project Requirement:

- It provides a way for students to link their different courses and experiences together.
- It provides an opportunity for students to integrate Core competencies.
- It showcases the value of USD's liberal arts education.

Advantages/Disadvantages of the Core Advanced Integration Project Within the Major Option:

- Pro: It provides an opportunity for students to synthesize Core competencies and to apply knowledge.
- Pro: It provides flexibility to departments/units that have existing capstone courses.
- Con: It does not stress interdisciplinary approaches and understandings as much as the other options.

Advantages/Disadvantages of the Core Advanced Integration Outside of the Major Option:

- Pro: It provides an opportunity for students to make connections between disciplines, to apply knowledge, to make connections between curricular and co-curricular activities, and to synthesize integration of competencies.
- Con: It is not clear which department or departments would offer these interdisciplinary courses/experiences.

Advantages/Disadvantages of the Core Advanced Integration Project Cluster Option:

- Pro: It provides a structure for students to make connections between disciplines, to apply knowledge, to make connections between curricular and co-curricular activities, and to synthesize integration of competencies.
- Pro: The 4-5 unit courses offer a parallel to the first year seminars, and thus, provide a consistent structure for faculty and students.
- Pro: Courses already developed that fulfill a major requirement (or another core requirement) could be incorporated into clusters to facilitate students in majors that have very structured upper-division requirements (e.g. business, engineering, sciences) that prevent many free electives.
- Con: It may present difficulties in terms of scheduling and finding the spaces if there are any meetings where all 3-4 classes will meet at the same time.

As with the other components of the integration model discussed in this report, the Core Advanced Integration Project (regardless of which option is used) will require the necessary resources for faculty development to ensure the success of this requirement.

Conclusion

The integration of knowledge and the application of knowledge are key features of a liberal arts education. Many of the high impact practices discussed in this report – community service-learning, living learning communities, undergraduate research, and capstone courses and projects – are already part of the USD experience – yet the opportunities vary between departments and units. The committee believes that they are not coordinated in a manner that facilitates the integration of discipline knowledge, the integration of competencies, and the application of knowledge to real world experiences. With the addition of the first year seminar, more intentional linkages between the fall and spring LLC courses, and the requirement of a Advanced Integration Project we can build upon a foundation that already exists at USD and offer a model of liberal arts education that is consistent with our mission as well as our undergraduate learning goals and outcomes.