

# **The Loyola Core: A Proposal for a More “Common” Curriculum**

College of Humanities and Natural Sciences/College of Arts and Sciences  
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# Proposal History and Background Information

- Beginning in 2005 and after several years of intensive development and implementation activities involving two task forces (i.e., *Common Curriculum Review Task Force* and *Common Curriculum Implementation Task Force*, the new common curriculum (CC) was inaugurated in Fall of 2013.
- By the end of the Fall 2013 semester, however, the new CC was reduced from 57-58 to 51 credit hours due to financial and staffing challenges. The *Foreign Language* requirement was reduced from 12 to 6 hours (i.e., placement +1) and the implementation of the *Engaging Science: Laboratory* requirement was deferred for a period of two years pending further evaluation and feasibility study.

# The Common Curriculum

## revised Fall 2013

Introductory (21 cr)	Advanced (24-25 cr)	Language (up to <del>12</del> 6 cr)	RACs (Check off - 0 cr)
First-Year Seminar	Creative Arts and Cultures ( <del>2</del> 3 cr)	<del>A100</del> Placement	Catholic Tradition
ENGL T122 Critical Reading & Writing	Writing about Literature	<del>A101</del> Placement +1	Diversity
MATH T122 Math Models or MATH A115 Intro to Finite Math or MATH A257 Calculus I	Social Science	<del>A200</del>	Premodern
HIST T122 Global History I or HIST T124 Global History II	HIST II	<del>A201</del>	
PHIL T122 Phil of the Human Person	PHIL II – Foundations of Knowledge		
RELS T122 Religions of the World or RELS T124 Christianity and Society	RELS II		
SCIE T129 Investigating Nature	Natural Science in Context <del>Engaging in Science: Lab (1 cr)</del>		
	Foundational Ethics		
			<b>TOTAL: <del>57-58</del> 51 CREDITS</b>

## Curricular Challenges:

A significant lack of commonality across colleges (even after reduction to 51 cr), particularly in elective-challenged majors/programs was evident . . .

- Elective-challenged Eligibility
  - 12 or fewer General Electives in degree program
  - additional content in the major and/or reduction in general education (i.e., Common Curriculum) coursework justified by accreditation requirements and/or best practices in the discipline
  - new degree programs for F15 with reduced CC requirements: BFA Digital Filmmaking (39 cr), BS Popular Commercial Music (39 cr), \*BD Design (39 cr), BBA Business Analytics (39 cr)
  - result: reductions in CC of 3-12 cr

<i>% of students enrolled in elective-challenged majors</i>	<i>Class of 2019</i>	<i>Class of 2018</i>	<i>Class of 2017</i>
Humanities and Natural Sciences	37.5%	39.7%	33.8%
Social Sciences	0%	0%	0%
Business	100%	100%	100%
Music and Fine Arts	87.4%	91.2%	82.2%
<b>Total</b>	<b>52.9%</b>	<b>57.4%</b>	<b>50.9%</b>

Figures based on data provided by the Office of Institutional Research and Effectiveness. See "Enrollment by Major with Registered Hours," September 30, 2015, [http://academicaffairs.loyno.edu/sites/academicaffairs.loyno.edu/files/pf5\\_11.pdf](http://academicaffairs.loyno.edu/sites/academicaffairs.loyno.edu/files/pf5_11.pdf)

**Lack of commonality** across colleges/programs has created a number of problems, such as . . .

- Difficulty in conducting **meaningful assessment** (SACS-COC requires that general education component for an UG degree program be “**based on a coherent rationale**” (Standard 2.7.3))
- Difficulty in creating a **Multi-Year Master Course Schedule**, which is essential for student planning (a key factor effecting student retention)
- **Difficulty for students desiring to change majors**, particularly across colleges, which results in students leaving the university.

***The lack of commonality has made the Common Curriculum a misnomer!***

# Assessment Results for 2014 and 2015 Point to Other Challenges

- The **complexity** of the Common Curriculum has posed challenges:
  - **Advising** – resulting in significantly lower-levels of student satisfaction (SSI 2014, NSSE, 2014 and 2015). Students, faculty, and staff complain that the CC is incomprehensible.
  - **Administrative exceptions** – have to be applied in many cases to avoid students taking additional coursework due to mistakes or misunderstandings.
  - **Requirements Across the Curriculum (RAC)** have placed additional burdens on already strained degree programs especially where there are fewer options for satisfying RACs within the major (e.g., in the Natural Sciences and in Business).
  - **Discourages new transfer students.**

## Assessment Results Point to Serious Challenges (cont.)

- A common curriculum that takes nearly 2 years to complete plus course work in the major that takes more than 2.5 years to complete equals **low 4-year graduation rates**.
- A low 4-year graduation rate is a very serious problem considering the large proportion of our students who are **Pell grant recipients**, which requires graduation in 4 years.
- **Many students can't "afford" to change their majors** and many can't take maximum advantage of the wonderful educational opportunities that Loyola has to offer (e.g., add an interdisciplinary minor).



## Process:

**In response to these challenges and in consideration of the college restructure plan, the SCCC approved a preliminary model for a 39-hour CC to be widely shared with campus members in order to obtain feedback.**

- In Academic–Year (AY) 2014-15, Dr. Sebastian presented the preliminary model to various HNS groups, e.g.,
  - HNS Faculty Assembly
  - HNS Council of Chairs
  - Academic Departments (the Departments of Philosophy and Religious Studies)
- In AY 2015-16, SCCC deliberations and campus conversations have continued, e.g.,
  - Preliminary model has been discussed with Associate Deans
  - Model was shared at the Academic Advising Council meeting in early October
  - A formal presentation was given at the Academic Affairs Committee of the BOT in October 15, 2015, and
  - Many meetings/discussions with various program directors, faculty, and staff have taken place.

**Extensive SCCC Discussions and Campus Feedback have informed the development of the proposal for a *Loyola Core* that is more “common” across majors/programs and colleges, transparent, and manageable by all degree programs.**

- **The SCCC approved the model for the Loyola Core on September 11, 2015** (which was contingent upon the approval of RELS I and II proposal (approved October 9, 2015) and PHIL I and II proposal (approved November 6, 2015).
- **The UC&CC approved the Loyola Core on November 13, 2015.**
- **SCAP is currently considering the proposal.**

# **The Loyola Core Recommendations**

# RECOMMENDATION I: Establish a Standard 39-hour Core Curriculum for all UG Degree Programs\*

## Foundation Courses

• First-year Seminar	3 cr
• Critical Reading and Writing (Courses are writing intensive)	3 cr
• Math Models (Specific Course Depends on major)	3 cr
• Investigating Nature	3 cr
	12 cr

## Knowledge/Values Courses

• Global History	6 cr
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– HIST I: (T122 Pre-modern or T124 Modern)</li> <li>– HIST II: Selection of courses depending on HIST I choice (SLOs on Diversity and Pre-modern where appropriate)</li> </ul>	
• Philosophy	6 cr
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– PHIL I <b>Introduction to Philosophy of Reasoning</b> (Selection of courses)</li> <li>– PHIL II <b>Philosophy of Knowledge and Morality</b> (Selection of courses) (SLOs on Foundational Ethics where appropriate)</li> </ul>	
• Religious Studies	6 cr
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– RELS I <b>Christian Theology</b> (Selection of courses)</li> <li>– RELS II World Religions (Selection of courses) (SLOs on Catholic Tradition and Foundational Ethics where appropriate)</li> </ul>	
• Natural Science in Context	3 cr
• Writing About Literature (Writing intensive)	3 cr
• Social Science (SLOs on diversity)	3 cr
• Creative Arts and Cultures	3 cr
	42 cr
	-3 cr

\* Exceptions include Music Education, Music Therapy, and Non-Traditional Degree Programs

\*\* 42 credit hours total; 3 cr to be fulfilled by an appropriate introductory or general content course required within the major for each degree program, resulting in an automatic reduction of 3 cr from the total.

**Overall TOTAL\*\* 39 cr**

# Summary of Key Changes

- **The distinction between *Introductory* and *Advanced* courses has been changed to:**
  - **Foundation** courses – these courses emphasize skills necessary to succeed in all college coursework
  - **Knowledge/Values** courses – these courses expose students to disciplinary and multidisciplinary modes of inquiry and serve to develop students' appreciation for and commitment to Loyola's Catholic Jesuit mission and tenets of liberal education.
- **Removal of the language requirement from the Loyola Core** comes with a strong recommendation that colleges/programs reinstate a language requirement as a college/program requirement where appropriate.
- **Removal of the standalone ethics** course also comes with a strong encouragement that ethical reasoning be incorporated across the curriculum. In the core curriculum Fundamental Ethic will be included among the core course selections for both RELS and PHIL. It is recommended that majors include ethics courses or ethics SLOs in designated courses culminating in major's senior capstone or senior seminar courses, which includes a component of disciplinary-related ethical issues and ethical reasoning.
- **Elimination of Requirements across the Curriculum (RAC) as a check-off requirement.** However, the History Department has committed to including SLOs related to *diversity* in their core history courses; the *pre-modern* emphasis is built into the HIST 122 course; and a selection of upper-level HIST courses. The Social Sciences are urged to include SLOs on *diversity* in their core offerings. SLOs related to the *Catholic tradition* will be included in the Christian Theology (RELS 122) courses. It is important to point out that during the implementation of the RAC requirement, we have added a large number of courses across the curriculum with one or more RAC designations. These courses will continue to be offered and serve to enrich our curriculum.

## RECOMMENDATIONS II and III

- **Recommendation II:** Colleges are urged to consider development of any additional college-, division-, or program-level requirements as appropriate (e.g., adding foreign language requirement for BA degree programs).
- **Recommendations III:** Rename the Common Curriculum the Loyola Core. “Loyola Core” signals both the rootedness of our core curriculum in the spirituality of Saint Ignatius Loyola and its centrality (core < Latin *cor*, “heart”) within the Loyola educational experience.

# Benefits of the Proposed Loyola Core

*Revision responds to current challenges:*

- **Simplifies structure while preserving its curricular distinctiveness and strengths**
  - ✓ Builds foundational knowledge and skills
  - ✓ Introduces students to the world's major intellectual traditions
  - ✓ Increases students understanding of Catholic tradition & world religions
  - ✓ Expands experiential learning opportunities – connecting classroom learning with real world applications through community engaged learning, scholarship, and service; UG faculty-student collaborative research/scholarship; internships; and study abroad programs)
  - ✓ Enhances interdisciplinary understanding
  - ✓ Develops global understanding

## Benefits of the Proposed Loyola Core

*Revision responds to current challenges:*

- Ensuring that students across colleges and degree programs experience a *more* common curriculum designed around a
  - ✓ Common set of core learning goals/outcomes that are measurable
  - ✓ Consistently implemented policies that are clearly articulated and understood



# Benefits of the Proposed Loyola Core

*Revision responds to current challenges:*

- Allowing students maximum opportunity to experience the very best that Loyola has to offer, through . . .
  - ✓ Providing greater choices in course selection
  - ✓ Expanding opportunities to complete interdisciplinary minors
  - ✓ Allowing longer-range planning and scheduling of courses as well as service learning, internships, and study abroad opportunities, etc.

## Benefits of the Proposed Loyola Core

*Revision responds to current challenges:*

- **Enhancing the university's ability to attract and recruit new students, through . . .**
  - ✓ Offering a more competitive core curriculum
  - ✓ Facilitating development and implementation of transfer student articulation agreements
- **Enhancing the university's ability to retain students, through . . .**
  - ✓ Improving student success – persistence and graduation rates

## Next Steps

- ❖ The final Steps in the implementation of a core curriculum involve integrating the core curriculum with the UG major curriculum as a whole, demonstrating a more holistic, developmental approach serving to underscore our commitment to educating and caring for the whole person (*cura personalis*).

For example, students begin with the First-Year Seminar, which is part of the core curriculum; and most (not all) of them have a culminating experience in their majors in their last year of study. However, these senior-year experiences vary greatly across majors. In addition to identifying these types of educational experiences with greater consistency, it is important to consider a more consistent set of Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs). It is also important to consider ways to enhance our students' senior seminar/capstone/culminating educational experiences, e.g., in addition to including disciplinary-based learning, these senior seminars could also incorporate senior-level disciplinary-based experiential projects as well as preparation for graduation/transition with special emphasis on moral and ethical values in the context of students' majors and professional formation.

- ❖ Expanding/amplifying and the university's commitment to experiential learning across the core curriculum and major courses where appropriate.

This is consistent with the University's Strategic Plan: *Transforming Loyola 2020* and the University's Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP): *Discerning Minds* (required by SACS), both of which emphasize building opportunities for experiential learning/scholarship/research across our undergraduate curricula (i.e., core curriculum and the disciplinary majors) providing introductory-level and advanced-level experiential opportunities, respectively. Experiential learning opportunities (e.g., community engagement learning/scholarship, faculty-student collaborative research/scholarship, internships, etc.) represent one of our university's great strengths. This will enhance our ability to lead with our strengths!

# The Loyola Core: Mission and Goals

The Loyola Core equips students to understand the world as it is and how they can work to make it better, to focus on the values that shape their lives, to free themselves from prejudice and unexamined views, and to acquire knowledge and skills that inspire them to act and reflect critically on their actions as they seek the creation of a more just world.

The Loyola Core is the cornerstone of the nearly 500-year-old distinctive Jesuit tradition of connecting educational excellence with social justice. The mission of the Loyola Core is to educate the whole person, a central tenet of the Ignatian vision of education.

In the tradition of Jesuit education, Loyola encourages students to be “contemplatives in action” who reflect on their knowledge and experience to become selfless in the service of others. This includes more than simply a collection of courses. It is an integration of critical components which, taken together, empower students to think critically, creatively, and reflectively in order to act justly.

Loyola’s holistic curriculum, which is deeply grounded in Jesuit values and the liberal arts and sciences, is designed to form students of competence, conscience, and compassion who will graduate with a full understanding of disciplinary knowledge, the ability to think critically, a sense of self-awareness, and a commitment to a life of learning and service.

# The Loyola Core Competencies

The goal of the *Loyola Core* is to foster students' competency in five key areas:

- **Ignatian Values:** Critical Thinking/Reflective Discernment; Care for the Whole Person – *Cura Personalis*; Forming Men and Women With and For Others; Celebrating Diversity and Inclusive Excellence; Ethical Reasoning and Action; Compassionate, Active Engagement with the World; Commitment to Justice and Just Action; and Commitment to Life-long Learning and Service
- **Building Foundational Skills and Knowledge:** Effective communication (*Eloquentia Perfecta*), quantitative reasoning (mathematical/computational literacy), information literacy, scientific literacy
- **Increasing Understanding and Knowledge of the World's Major Intellectual Perspectives and Traditions:** Understanding Philosophical perspectives of human knowledge; world religious traditions, global history, great works of literature and literary criticism, human cultures & traditions and social behavior, and appreciation of creative arts
- **Knowledge of the Physical and Natural World:** Understanding of scientific construction of knowledge, basic concepts, terms, scientific paradigms, knowledge of strengths and weaknesses of scientific methods of investigation, qualitative and quantitative reasoning/analysis, and ability to critically review scientific studies, design and conduct a scientific project, and environmental and ecological understanding
- **Connection of Classroom Learning with Real World Applications and Service:** Synthesis and advanced analysis and disciplinary applications across general and specialized studies; community engaged learning/research; internships; field practica; student–faculty collaborative scholarship/research/artistic performance; study abroad experiences

# Some Characteristics of Jesuit Colleges & Universities: A Self Evaluation Instrument (AJCU, 2012)

## Core Curriculum

- Is the core curriculum reflective of the institution's commitment to faith and justice and key values of the institution?
- Does it offer students an introduction to the world's major intellectual traditions?
- Does it offer students an introduction to Catholic thought and a similar introduction to the world's major religious traditions?
- Are the various curricula of the institution designed in such a way that every graduate has achieved at least a basic understanding of what it means to be Catholic and Jesuit?
- Are these courses taught by faculty who are sympathetic to the material, passionate about teaching undergraduates, and committed to the idea that students are capable of falling in love with life's big questions through the core curriculum?
- (AJCU, 2012: p. 15)

# Tensions that ACJU Institutions Face

## Tension:

- Our Universities need to remain competitive with our peer institutions and the demands of our students, both of which suggest a model of education that values pre-professional training and the development of skills aimed at employment.

## Challenge: The Crisis of the Humanities and the Quest to Remain “competitive”

- Traditional core curricula that focused on grounding students in the Western intellectual tradition through theology, philosophy, literature and history have been adapted and altered to accommodate the need for skill-training and “practical” knowledge at some cost to the breadth and depth of a classical education. . . . Our Universities need to continue to work to achieve an appropriate balance between an education that offers students foundational knowledge in the Western intellectual tradition with the need to offer our students the skills-training and pre-professional programming that our peer institutions offer and the job market requires. How is this addressed?

(AJCU, 2012: p. 16)