Executive Summary

This proposal provides a framework for a tiered and sequential core Core of Common Studies that features the following priorities:

--a fully integrated sequence of first-year courses
--interdisciplinary and team-taught learning
--writing and communication skills
--flexibility
--the opportunity to explore fields complementary to students’ primary courses of study
--the opportunity to explore fields of personal interest to students
--a capstone experience that provides flexibility, but also a mandate to end students’ careers with a purposeful examination of the knowledge and skills they have attained.

Our proposal features a slightly smaller number of credit hours than the current core. It will require a significant adjustment in departmental and college teaching assignments, although not a significant change in current departmental staffing. Resources will be required to facilitate curriculum development and, possibly, to hire long-term participating faculty.

Description

This proposal presents a framework for a tiered and sequential Core of Common Studies focused on interdisciplinary and integrated learning. The key features that depart from the current Core include: 1) unique core courses designed around broad themes with specific learning outcomes incorporated from the start, 2) a sequential process for students moving through the core, 3) Four-credit courses that provide greater opportunities for discussion and reflection in the classroom, and 4) opportunities for experiences outside the classroom as an integrated part of the Core.

Students will move through the Core starting with newly designed thematic courses in their first year, along with ENGL 1001, which most of our group sees as vital. The learning outcomes and themes for each of the first year courses will foreground their design so both faculty and students clearly understand the goals of the courses and of the core. We envision two faculty per course in these first three classes in the sequence. Each course would expose students to concepts, approaches, methodologies, and writing styles of different but related fields. Furthermore, each course will strive to integrate Jesuit educational principles.

In addition to these four foundational core courses, students will be required to attend or view a set number of co-curricular events, speakers, or online videos addressing a common issue. This TEDx-style series will invite experts across and outside campus to contribute.

In addition to the first year sequence, students will take 9 credits in a single field outside their majors, providing an opportunity for them to take a “deep dive” into a thematic area that complements their course of study or allows them to explore a topic of interest. They will also take a second writing intensive course (English 1002, COMM 1100, or other existing or new courses as designated by CCRC) designed to expose students to discipline-specific writing conventions as well as advanced writing and communication techniques. Finally, all students will complete a capstone course, within their discipline if possible, in the senior year.

Version 1:

- Level 1: (completed during first year): Total Credits 30-32 (depending on selection of courses in Level 2)
  - 3 new courses (4-credits each) designed specifically for the Core with unique identifiers
    - Themes: Exploring Human Society (Humanities/Social Sciences), Understanding and Measuring the Physical World (Sciences/Math), Finding Meaning (Humanities)
- All team taught courses, with 2 instructors from a variety of related disciplines, for greater interdisciplinary and integrated learning
- Four-credit courses for greater discussion opportunity (possibly taught with breakout sessions led by Teaching Assistants)
- Course design is driven by the Learning Outcomes and commonality in the core courses; assessment is included from the beginning design
  - ENGL 1001 as a common requirement
  - First Year TEDx series grouped around a common theme
    - Common theme (e.g. environment, global politics, etc.)
    - Series of events and online available videos/modules for students to be exposed to multiple perspective and approaches to a common issue/problem
    - Content could be integrated into other courses in Level 1
    - Experiences are required and must be accounted for in some way

- Level 2:
  - Three courses (min 9 credits) in a single area outside student’s major
  - One course (min 3 credits) in advanced writing (ENGL 1002, COMM 1100, or other existing or new courses as designated by CCRC)

- Level 3:
  - Capstone course within or outside the major as appropriate

An alternative version of this curriculum proposed by a member of our working group features many of the same components but has significant distinctions in terms of writing proficiency and proficiency in a foreign language. In this model, as demonstrated in the attached chart, the Jesuit mission is particularly tied into each level.

**Version 2:** all 3 levels aligned to Jesuit mission: Total Credits 28-30 (depending on selection of courses in Level 2)

- Level 1: (completed during first two years)
  - 4 new courses (4-credits each) designed specifically for the Core with unique identifiers
    - Themes: Explaining the World (Humanities/Social Sciences), Measuring the World (Sciences/Math), Finding Meaning in the World (Humanities), **Communicating in the World** (Humanities/Social Sciences)
    - **Single instructor courses** from a variety of departments
    - Four-credit courses for greater discussion opportunity (possibly taught with breakout sessions led by Teaching Assistants)
    - Course design is driven by the Learning Outcomes and commonality in the core courses; assessment is included from the beginning design
    - **Communicating in the World includes a specific inclusion of inter-cultural competence as well as traditional communication skills, which could be a modification of the current ENGL 1001 or a new course entirely**

- Level 2:
  - Three courses (min 9 credits) in one area outside student’s major

- Level 3:
  - Capstone course, within or outside major, **specifically designed as integrative course bringing back four themes of Level 1**

- Proficiencies: accepted through appropriate test scores or course fulfillment
  - Foreign Language – intermediate
  - English Writing – proficient
The learning outcomes as linked to the courses in the framework are taken directly from University Core of Common Studies Revision Process, Survey #2. A total of 13 Learning Outcomes appear in Version 1 and 8 appear in Version 2, many of them from the top ten most highly prioritized on the survey.

We see this model as highly integrated and flexible for students and faculty. The three four-credit courses feature team-teaching and interdisciplinary learning that will introduce multiple methodologies and literacies and demonstrate Jesuit principles and practices in higher education. The nine-credits taken outside a student’s major will be chosen largely from existing classes, upper or lower division; the capstone experience may require departments to design new courses. In addition, although the core requires all first year students to take four courses, it will still allow students in particular courses of study to take the necessary first-year courses (BIOL and CHEM for pre-med students, for instance).

A major adjustment of teaching responsibilities will inevitably be required. The first year courses would ideally have small caps, although another option would be to hold relatively large lectures with small discussion sections, which would integrate the work of faculty and graduate students on campus. Faculty members will not be teaching outside their fields; although all sections of a course in the first year sequence will share common learning objectives, faculty will be allowed to reach those objectives in myriad ways. However, faculty development and oversight in the design of these courses will be needed. A number of sections of the new core sequence can be taught by faculty currently teaching first year surveys in a number of departments, especially in Arts and Sciences. It’s also possible that a small cadre of long-term visiting assistants could be recruited to act as the core faculty of the first year sequence, with regular faculty rotating in and out for two or three year terms.

Additionally, faculty development and oversight by CCRC and the Director of the Core of Common Studies will be necessary for any departments interested in developing additional writing intensive courses.

The Jesuit mission, particularly Ignatian values and pedagogy, will be central to each of the first year courses as well as the capstone course. In this way students’ experiences at Marquette University will be framed by the Jesuit identity of the university.