Executive Summary
This proposed core framework has two components: A common experience that all students will share, and a flexible component that may be different for different domains or majors. Both the common and flexible parts can include integration. Integration in this framework could either be by pairing core courses (e.g. rhetoric and theology) or by integrating within a team-taught course with a hybrid syllabus. This framework can be targeted at some of the most multi-disciplinary outcomes that were brought up by the Marquette community. Integrating courses in the core will necessitate a conscious plan for faculty to form a cohesive core and faculty will be incentivized to collaborate in interesting ways.

A common experience founded in a threshold of intellectual literacy is at the heart of a Jesuit education. This is rooted in the liberal arts, sciences, and Ignatian social justice. A clear duty to our students is that they graduate with a solid foundation in math, science, languages, rhetoric, writing and communication as well as the engaged reasoning of philosophy and spiritual awareness provided by theology. The top two outcomes of the university wide survey included how MU wanted students to leave the university experience being able to “communicate effectively in writing, speaking and artistic expression” and “develop creative, problem-solving strategies and critical thinking skills in the context of complex global issues.” A core revision should include courses that address these issues and forge a common experience for students that will allow them the skills to achieve in the large global world.

Many of these foundational courses will necessarily specialize, but at the same time ought to be parts of a cohesive and intentional curriculum for students. Our first recommendation, then, is for students to take a common set of first-level courses where the outcomes have been shared among faculty. This will allow the instructors in each area to address issues of relevance and purpose across disciplines. An enhanced approach would give a deliberate cross-disciplinary experience that all incoming students take, roughly along the lines of our Introduction to Inquiry course that steps back from content and critically examines the nature of inquiry and acquisition of knowledge. All of these course should make students aware of the intellectual journey students will take at MU and after and encourage integration into areas of interest that are practical and desired by the student.

The distinctive Jesuit, Catholic nature of the curriculum can be addressed in constrained elective courses that examine awareness of the self, concerns for others and the natural world, encouragement for study abroad, and the interplay between faith and reason. Ideally these should be team taught, or through paired teaching that brings apparently disparate disciplines to bear on a similar topic. We are also aware that the uniqueness of MU will determine a student’s direction and how instructors and professors approach these goals may differ. We want to stress that a focus on immersive learning seems to be a strong ideal at the university and there can be many ways to achieve this goal – either though team teaching or individualized attention to the needs of students.

This proposed core framework then has a distributional foundation, but offers students flexibility within their colleges and majors; it also recognizes that certain subject areas (such as rhetoric, philosophy, and theology) are essential or architectonic “literacies” in any Jesuit education. These are goods to be retained. The chief weakness of a distributional framework is that it fails to deliver or perform integration of the various disciplines. Leading educational theorists at secular universities suggest that integration is something which

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must be a faculty-led and faculty-modeled enterprise;² how much more so a Jesuit university, whose principles lead it to assert the “unity of knowledge?”³ As such, we propose:

- A Core with a “common experience” at the center: this would include certain required courses, respect the integrity of the disciplines, and safeguard a modicum of basic intellectual literacy across the arts and sciences.
- A core with some (though not indefinite) elective flexibility. Not every element in the core needs to be determined. Beyond the common experience different colleges might negotiate with the UCCS a plan for fulfilling elective competency requirements or creating “suggested pathways” through the elective part of the core.
- An integrative core. Admittedly, this is an aspirational part of the proposal which depends upon the good will of the faculty and the incentives offered by the university. Integration courses might be accomplished through “paired” courses, as currently used in the Honors College; or through team-taught courses, electively developed by faculty pairs across the disciplines. It is essential that either model be recognized as accomplishing integration.
- Also, we want to stress the necessity for student engagement. All instructors and professors should retain a desire to see students achieve and push the tenets of involvement in classwork, clubs, activities, internships, study abroad programs, writing and communicating activities, and overall inclusion in immersive education. A student achieves when he/she is cultivated/encouraged/nurtured from all sides of the academic world. This will improve all skills for students allowing them to seek out employment, post graduate work in an ever growing and global economy. We must teach students to adapt through critical thinking in order to meet the needs of the future. Leading by example can help shape this ideal.

The following outcomes illustrate the need for integration:

- Develop creative, problem-solving strategies and critical thinking skills in the context of complex global issues.
- Purposefully connect and integrate knowledge and skills from across disciplines to solve problems in socially responsible ways.
- Demonstrate an understanding of broader cultural, historical, theological, or conceptual contexts of particular issues, ideas, objects, or events past and present.
- Engage in cooperative and cross-disciplinary problem solving to address real world challenges.

The four above-listed outcomes illustrate the importance of guiding our students toward the discussion of issues, development of critical thinking skills and resolution of problems via a holistic interdisciplinary, cross-cultural approach, which involves not only the study and linking of the various disciplines involved, but also a real knowledge and understanding of the diverse languages and cultures associated with these different disciplines, and an ability to put them into practice in an effective and feasible manner, helping to create real change in both the contemporary global society in which our students presently engage and also the one they envision for the future.

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² Jonathan Z. Smith, “Re-forming the Undergraduate Curriculum: A Retrospective” in On Teaching Religion, ed. Christopher I. Lehrich (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 94: “By charter, by statute, by any notion of faculty responsibility, not to speak of by student fee, it is the faculty alone who is charged with providing organization. To do otherwise is to violate what my colleagues at Chicago have taken to calling Smith’s iron law: A student may not be asked to integrate what the faculty will not.”

³ Buckley, The Catholic University as Promise and Project, 151.
We also believe there is significant benefit in developing capstone courses that can be summative of a student’s experience, and allow students from all disciplines to reflect on their learning and discern how best to engage the world after Marquette.

These suggestions do not require a major reallocation of resources or retooling of faculty expertise. Rather, they require creative and constructive realignment of resources at the university level, and appropriate incentives for all those involved. Moreover, they ask that there is a conscious plan for faculty to participate in the formation of an integrated and cohesive curriculum, which would go toward a new, transformed core instead of repackaging current offerings into a revised set of requirements.