A Proposal for Marquette’s Core Curriculum: Discover, Engage to Transform

I. Executive summary
This proposal for the core curriculum seeks integration not only in its content, but in its embracing of both an intentional focus on inquiry in the Jesuit and liberal arts tradition and a growing need to prepare students for careers and community life in an ever-changing world. To do this, all students will share the common experience of a two sequence introduction to what many may recognize as Jesuit Way of Proceeding¹. Building on these courses, students will choose two discovery seminars from a list of 6 – 10 possible theme based seminars. Students will choose 3 engagement courses that follow from one of the two discovery seminars. This will provide more in-depth exploration into the themes and show how themes might be viewed from diverse disciplinary perspectives. Finally, students will complete core experience with a capstone experience that asks them to draw from the Way of Proceeding, their engagement with their chosen them and apply it to address a “real-world” challenge.

II. Description of the model

A) Explanation of the Idea
This core provides a formative experience in the first year and then builds upon that foundation through mission based themed seminars and culminates with a community based, integrative project. This blends the idea of core concepts of Marquette’s mission and a need for students to understand how these fundamentals provide them with the skills, knowledge, abilities and mindsets for addressing the challenges of this world. It is conceptual and applied and takes a sequential approach to the formation of our students. Our hope is that this model will help students develop habits – a way of proceeding that they will be able to enact throughout their lives and across contexts. The core includes 24 total credits.

Year 1: Way of Proceeding Courses – CORE 1001, CORE 1002
While there are many elements to the Jesuit Way of Proceeding, this core draws attention most specifically to the ideas of contemplation in action, partnership and solidarity with others, and search for the magis. “The magis is not simply one among others in a list of Jesuit characteristics. It permeates them all. The entire life of Ignatius was a pilgrim search for the magis, the ever greater glory of God, the ever fuller service of our neighbor, the more universal good, the more effective...Mediocrity has no place in Ignatius’s worldview...As partners in mission, Jesuits and our colleagues are never content with the status quo, the known, the tried, the already existing. We are constantly driven to discover, redefine, and reach out for the magis. For us, frontiers and boundaries are not obstacles or ends, but new challenges to be faced, new opportunities to be welcomed...Our way of proceeding is a way of challenge.”

In keeping with this mindset, these courses will be interdisciplinary in focus (emphasizing the wholeness of knowledge) but introduce the ideas of Jesuit spirituality, philosophical thinking, and the ways that we as humans engage with one another (including understanding difference). Along with these foundational aspects, the course can be expanding to include modes of reasoning (e.g., artistic, quantitative, and scientific).

¹ http://image.jesuits.org/NYKNENPROV/media/Our%20Way%20of%20Proceeding%202011%2024%202015.pdf
This class can be taught in a large lecture format with small peer mentor (select senior students) discussion groups. The core curriculum committee would be responsible for the oversight of these seminars.

Year 2: Discovery Seminars - students choose 2 Each discovery seminar will emphasize the development of communication skills (dialogue, writing, public presentation) and research skills. The classes will build upon CORE 1001 and 1002 asking students to think about how human beings engage with another, integrating topics of social responsibility and ethical/moral decision-making. The seminars will introduce a specific mission theme. These seminars are intended to allow students to discover an issue, challenge or opportunity that matters to them and that is complementary (but distinct from) their majors.

Themes will be the basis of the remainder of the core. Possible themes include: Global Health; Environmental Stewardship; Technology and Social Transformation; Immigration, migration & community; Digital Citizenship; Arts in a Democratic Society; Advocacy and Public Policy; Peace & Justice; Family Studies; Conflict and Identity.

All faculty are eligible to teach in these seminars. However, oversight of these courses will be the responsibility of the core curriculum committee. These courses will continue to use mentor sessions like the CORE 1001 and 1002 classes.

Year 3 & 4: Engagement Courses – clustered and in-depth explorations of student’s chosen theme; students choose 3 Upon completion of the discovery seminars, students will choose the theme that best connects to personal and professional goals that engages their thinking the most. These courses will be grouped by themes, and students will choose three from their chosen theme. All courses must be from different departments, and only one can count toward the students major.

These courses will be offered by the departments, and any faculty can propose a course for any of the established themes. Some courses may address multiple themes. The courses will allow student to engage the themes with greater depth. These courses provide opportunities for students to apply what they have learned in CORE 1001/1002, the discovery seminars, and their majors. These courses will be existing departmental offerings, but for the core they will have designation/identifying number. These courses will be expected to continue to build on the core foundations and philosophies.

Year 4: Capstone – chosen in the student’s engagement theme Students’ last core experience will be a capstone that is intended to be a collaborative learning experience for students that requires students to extend into the community. Students, faculty, and community partners will work interdisciplinary teams to find ways to address challenges. The capstone will be focused on the same theme that students chose for the engagement seminar.

The core curriculum committee will develop resources, guidelines and expectations to assist faculty who teach these courses. Capstones may serve multiple theme areas. These courses will project based.
An example: A student may choose to take a Global Health and a Digital Citizenship Discovery Seminar. She then chooses to focus on Global Health, and so she takes a Nursing Class on Community Health, a Political Science Class on Public Policy and Health, and a Theology of Death and Dying class. For her capstone, she chooses an Immigrant Community Services course (that includes an investigation of healthcare options for immigrant communities).

**Learning outcomes:**
Communicate effectively in writing, speaking and artistic expression across contexts and platforms.

Develop creative, problem-solving strategies and critical thinking skills in the context of complex global issues.

Make appropriate professional and personal judgments rooted in a clearly articulated ethical or moral foundation.

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.

B. Other Issues
1. Integration
   The model intentionally builds on experiences by layering courses and asking for greater depth in exploring. The capstones with a focus on community projects are inherently interdisciplinary.

2. University’s Jesuit mission/social justice
   The entire model is based on the idea of a Jesuit Way of Proceeding and Marquette’s mission.

3. Support of Survey 2
   This model started with the top rated learning outcomes and considered how these might be linked to the Jesuit mission and liberal arts tradition of learning.

4. Needs of colleges
   This model highlights the mindsets and skills that were called for across campus. It does not increase the number of credits, but does reduce options for courses counted in the major (indeed only one course may count toward the major). It provides a link to the majors and gives opportunities for students to think about the core and their majors in the context of the capstone projects.

5. Acceptance and Implementation
   This model is similar to other national models. It can (and has) be done at a school the size of Marquette. The benefit is that it manages the tension of the hope for a common experience and the desire of all colleges to be able to participate. It doubles down on community engagement
aims of the strategic plan. There are several ways it could be modify if needed to help the transition.
Marquette Core Curriculum: Discovering, Engaging & Changing Our World

Senior Year
Choose a capstone that is within your chosen engagement theme. Capstones will address a social problem, challenge or opportunity. All capstones will include a community engagement project.

Third & Fourth Year
Students choose 3 courses from theme based groupings of courses. Two of three courses must be outside a student’s major.

Second Year
Each student chooses 2 discovery seminars. Focus on development of communication skills with emphasis on writing, public presentation/speaking, and advocacy. Introduce the engagement themes and build of key tenets introduced in Core 1001 & 1002.

First Year
Two courses that orient students to a mode of inquiry that explore the foundations of human experience and engagement – with other people, with their communities, the global community. Focuses on questions of philosophical thinking, spiritual, theological commitments, and diversity.