

Charge for University Core of Common Studies Revision Process

I. RATIONALE

The University Core of Common Studies (UCCS), as it currently exists, was implemented in Fall 2003. Since that time, Marquette University has completed its reaccreditation process with the Higher Learning Commission, and the UCCS has undergone its first formal program review in 2014. Lessons learned from these reviews, as well as shifts in the higher education landscape across the country, suggest that now is the opportune moment to engage in a revision process of the UCCS. With the successful reaccreditation by the Higher Learning Commission in 2014, Marquette University can focus its revision process on developing a more coherent UCCS that prepares students for a competitive 21st century economy in light of the 450 year tradition of Jesuit education.

It should also be noted that Marquette is not alone in reviewing and potentially revising its UCCS. Numerous AJCU institutions have in recent years revised their Core curricula; many other private and public institutions across the country have similarly revisited their general education requirements. Institutions that thrive in the 21st century will be those who can harness innovation and tradition to provide a unique educational experience, which can be articulated in clear terms to faculty, students, alumni, parents, employers, and other stakeholders. The UCCS should provide the most enriching experience for students possible, and distinguish Marquette from other private and public universities.

II. TIMELINE

Informed by similar revision processes that have occurred at peer and aspirational institutions, Marquette should expect the revision process to occur over a two-year period, with the stated goal of implementing a revised UCCS beginning Fall semester 2017.

To realize that goal, a campus plan needs to be devised that clearly identifies intermediary steps:

A small *Core Revision Facilitation Group* will be formed to oversee the revision by May 2015. During the summer of 2015, the Core Revision Facilitation Group will synthesize the research produced from the University reaccreditation process, the academic program review, the self-study produced by the Core Curriculum Review Committee (CCRC), the reports produced by the external reviewers of the current UCCS, and other salient information from peer and aspirational institutions. The precise composition and charge of the Core Revision Facilitation Group are discussed below.

Beginning fall semester 2015, the Core Revision Facilitation Group, working with the CCRC, will organize a series of conversations on future directions of a revised UCCS. It is expected that there will be a variety of meetings among disciplinary units, as well as some "disruptive" conversations across colleges and units to imagine innovative and workable plans. All faculty across the eight undergraduate colleges will be invited to participate, and given multiple opportunities to provide input and feedback on proposals as they are developed.

In order to foster genuinely innovative plans, it is expected that 2-3 distinct proposals for a revised UCCS would be developed by early Spring 2016. These plans should emerge from the campus conversations and in light of effective practices endorsed by bodies such as the American Association of Colleges and Universities (AACU).

The proposals should be presented to the campus community at a University Academic Senate meeting, which will be attended by the President. In consultation with the UAS, the Provost and President will determine which of the proposals will provide the framework for revising the UCCS.

Once a proposal is selected, the Core Revision Facilitation Group and CCRC will finalize a plan over summer 2016 that will be presented to the University Board of Undergraduate Studies during Fall semester 2016 for further discussion, focusing particularly on implementation and the logistics of transitioning from the current UCCS to a revised version. The campus community will have opportunities to have input on the specific course and other requirements that would make up the final proposal indirectly through their representatives on the CCRC and UBUS and directly through college-level discussions.

Ultimately, the revised UCCS, along with the implementation plan, should be presented to the University Academic Senate for endorsement by Spring semester 2017. Based on the endorsement of the UAS, the Office of the Provost will oversee the implementation of the revised UCCS. Toward that end, an implementation committee would be formed in Fall 2016 to ensure the smoothest possible transition to the revised UCCS.

More specific details on the [timeline](#) for revision, opportunities for participation including specific [process roles and responsibilities](#), and input in the process, can be found on the UCCS revision timetable document.

III. GUIDING PRINCIPLES

A revised UCCS must balance multiple priorities including the obligation to provide a transformative education that emerges from Jesuit pedagogical traditions and is distinctive to Marquette and the accreditation needs of the eight undergraduate colleges. Any successful proposal for a revised UCCS must accommodate both priorities. Creating a transformative education is true to our University's mission; it is also a necessity for Marquette to prepare our students to thrive in the 21st century.

Since the early 1970s, the promotion of social justice has been identified as a key component of Jesuit higher education, with then Superior General Pedro Arrupe declaring that "our prime educational objective must be to form men-and women-for-others." Similar sentiments have been echoed repeatedly, notably in the 2010 consensus statement by the Presidents of Jesuit institutions of higher learning: "Our primary mission is the education and formation of our students for the sake of the kind of persons they become and their wide influence for good in society in their lives, professions, and service."¹ It would thus be expected that a revised UCCS would seek to deliver on this mission, training students to be global citizens as well as successful

¹ [The Jesuit, Catholic Mission of U.S. Jesuit Colleges and Universities](#) (2010)

professionals. The Marquette University undergraduate experience must be truly transformative for the lives of our students; as a key component of that experience, the UCCS must help to guarantee that transformative influence.

A key element of any revision proposal must be a clear plan for greater integration among the courses that constitute the UCCS. Research on peer and aspirational institutions, survey data of Marquette faculty and students, and best practices identified by national organizations such as the AACU all confirm that increasing integration should be a top priority for revising the UCCS. For the UCCS to deliver on its promise of a transformative education, it cannot be simply a set of general education requirements, each of which is delivered in isolation from the others. There are multiple models of achieving greater integration, several of which are detailed in the self-study of the UCCS, and the most successful ones must be determined by the revision process.

A second key element of any revision must be a comprehensive set of assessments, based on the student learning outcomes associated with the UCCS, to ensure that students acquire a high degree of proficiency with stated learning outcomes. Assessment measures should be designed from the very beginning of the revision process, so that they can produce meaningful and actionable results. To arrive at these measures, the revision process should involve faculty engaging with fundamental questions: what should *all* students get from a Marquette education? What are the most important skills and knowledges for undergraduates to acquire across all majors?

The current UCCS has fewer total requirements than the vast majority of AJCU institutions; on the other hand, Marquette University has more undergraduate and professional colleges than the majority of its Jesuit peers.² Thus, while the requirements that constitute the UCCS may change, it is unlikely that a significant adjustment to total credit hours either higher or lower would be feasible.

The Offices of the President and Provost are committed to seeing this process through to its successful conclusion, and to assist faculty in the development and implementation of a revised UCCS. Faculty across all undergraduate colleges should feel confident that the President and Provost will be engaged in this process to ensure that colleagues are empowered to make a genuinely transformative education possible.

IV. CORE REVISION FACILITATION GROUP FORMATION AND RESPONSIBILITY

A successful revision process would engage faculty from across the undergraduate colleges, students, alumni, as well as external stakeholders. To ensure that the process proceeds in a transparent and efficient manner, a Core Revision Facilitation Group will be created. The group will be composed of the Director of the University Core of Common Studies along with 3-5 faculty members. Members should have significant experience with the UCCS as well as trends

² Of the 28 AJCU institutions, Gonzaga and University of San Francisco have a lower total course requirement for their Core (11 courses versus Marquette's 11-12 courses). Five other AJCU institutions have as few as 12 courses required (Canisius College, College of the Holy Cross, Georgetown [depending on student language proficiency], Loyola Marymount University, and Seattle University). The other 20 institutions have higher course requirements. Source: UCCS self-study (2014).

in best practices in higher education pedagogies. Committee members must also have significant experience in working across colleges, be widely respected on campus, and have experience with curriculum development.

Reporting to the Vice Provost for Undergraduate Programs and Teaching, the Core Revision Facilitation Group would work closely with the CCRC to plan a series of discussions in a variety of formats (e.g., focus groups, townhall-style meetings) to engage the campus community in the revision process. The Core Revision Facilitation Group would be ultimately charged with ensuring that formal revision proposals are written in light of campus feedback.

As a committee representing all eight undergraduate colleges, the CCRC would endorse all proposals to be submitted for formal academic review by UBUS and UAS. These representative bodies play a central role in University shared governance, and ensure broad University support for the academic mission of Marquette, and the central role of the UCCS in the academic formation of our undergraduate students.