

To: The Faculty Senate and the Provost

From: CCIC Co-Chairs Robin Bates and Linda Coughlin, CCIC members Ben Click, Barbara Beliveau, Brad Park, Terry Leonard, Michael Cain, Lois Stover, Mark Heidrich, Chris Tanner, David Finkelman, Holly Blumner, Cynthia Koenig, Don Stabile, and invited members Celia Rabinowitz and Erin McDermott

Subject: Core Curriculum Implementation Report

Date: June 5, 2007

Introduction

The new core curriculum represents the most extensive curriculum revision that St. Mary's College has undertaken since the NEH-funded Western Heritage curriculum of the mid-1980s. We have revised aspects of that curriculum since then—we dropped the “Western” emphasis, added the international languages requirement, consolidated the arts and arts history requirements, reduced the history requirement, dropped the “Q” and “W” requirements, added the St. Mary's Projects and the senior capstone experiences, dropped Values Inquiry—but we haven't faced the challenges of a comprehensive curriculum change in over 20 years. Because the new core curriculum is so far reaching, it will change normal campus patterns even more than the introduction of St. Mary's Projects did in the late 1990's. While the Core Curriculum Implementation Committee (CCIC) has tried to be sensitive to issues of disruption, the community must be prepared to do some things differently.

Since significant change requires significant effort from community members who are already working very hard, it is salutary to remind ourselves of the possibilities of renewal that lie before us. The new curriculum, if it lives up to its promise, will improve the quality of a St. Mary's education in profound ways. Small and intellectually exciting seminars will bring students into intimate contact with faculty, who will communicate the College's academic expectations and introduce students to intellectual discourse, classroom codes of conduct, and the four fundamental skills. Faculty will become better teachers as they come together in developmental workshops to prepare new courses and to develop new ways for teaching the skills and supervising internships. Community will be served through new connections between academic and student life, through the deliberate orientation of students into academic culture, and through the heightened attention paid to the needs of both in-coming and graduating students.

In certain ways, the new core curriculum is simple and straightforward. Students will take a first-year seminar, be instructed in the four liberal arts skills throughout their four years, take one international language course beyond entering competency, satisfy six breadth requirements, and engage in an academic experience outside the classroom. Within that framework, however, there is considerable room for development. The first-year seminars and out-of-classroom academic experiences will evolve as we gain experience with them, and departments will develop different ways to teach and assess the fundamental skills. Our implementation recommendations seek to start the ball rolling and to provide faculty with the resources they need. Ultimately, however, the core curriculum comes down to a series of on-going conversations. These conversations include the following:

- conversations amongst those faculty teaching the first-year seminars
- conversations within the departments about the four fundamental liberal arts skills
- conversations between the departments responsible for the different liberal arts approaches
- conversations within the college as a whole about study abroad, internships, and service and experiential learning

It is useful to remind ourselves that, because the core curriculum will evolve, we must be patient and trust the process. The first-seminars may be taught one way in the first year, another way in the fifth after faculty share their experiences with each other. The Core Curriculum will also evolve unevenly. Certain departments have more experience with certain aspects of the Core Curriculum than others (say, English with writing) so we cannot expect uniformity all at once. Rather than a rigid set of requirements, the Core Curriculum is a context within which improvement occurs. Grinnell College, which has been offering seminars and teaching the four liberal arts skills for over 30 years, still sees its Core Curriculum as evolving.

To ensure that this growth continues, we are recommending both a Core Curriculum Committee to keep us on track and a new “Dean of the First Year Experience and Core Curriculum” to attend to the myriad issues that will arise. With our current General Education Curriculum, even though individual courses are often excellently taught, collectively we have drifted, neglecting oversight and putting off important conversations. In the NSSE ratings, our students rank their introductory academic experiences far lower than they rank their capstone experiences. Constant improvement requires focused attention, which we have not had in the past.

One area of uncertainty warrants special mention: the new Core Curriculum requires three fewer courses than our current General Education Curriculum, and we do not know how students will “spend” their 12 extra credits. Certain departments, even as they see enrollment declines in lower-level classes, will see significant increases in upper-level ones, but we cannot predict where the changes will happen. Another unpredictable enrollment fluctuation will be the following: currently a significant number of students are being taught by adjunct faculty, especially in the English Department, and to the extent that this situation changes (for instance, there will be far fewer English 102 sections once the course is no longer required), those students will be taught by regular-line faculty. We must monitor the situation closely and explore ways of supporting those departments experiencing the greatest impact, whether by adding faculty lines, capping the number of overload credits students can take, or other creative means.

This is only one of a significant number of resources that will be required to carry out our implementation recommendations, and the Strategic Planning Committee has already been enjoined to begin thinking in terms of a long-term budget. Just as real curriculum change does not happen without significant effort, neither does it happen on the cheap, another mistake we have made in the past (for example, failing to add enough faculty lines to adequately support St. Mary’s Projects). This Core Curriculum initiative trumps all other initiatives before the College at present, and the College’s strategic and budgeting priorities must reflect that fact.

A different kind of resource that needs mentioning is faculty time. If faculty members are to invest significant time in developing first-year seminars, teaching and assessing the fundamental skills, conversing about goals and definitions, and mentoring internships, study abroad, and independent studies, then they need to receive credit towards tenure, promotion, and merit pay for doing so. Some colleges reduce scholarship expectations for faculty who are so involved, and we urge that St. Mary’s do so as well. Again, real curriculum change and faculty development do not happen on the cheap.

The task before us will test us, but would we want it any other way? The opportunity to create a vibrant intellectual community drew many of us to St. Mary’s. We have worked hard over the years to live up to the “honors” designation bestowed upon us by the state of Maryland. Towards that end, in our last significant curriculum revision we instituted St. Mary’s Projects and capstone courses. This revision complements that one and represents our next critical step forward.

History of these recommendations

Last September the College established the Core Curriculum Implementation Committee. The faculty elected half of the membership, and the provost appointed the other half. We had our first general CCIC meeting in October. The Provost appointed Linda Coughlin as one co-chair, and the committee elected Robin Bates as the other. The Committee then set up subcommittees to look at each section of the core curriculum. The membership on those subcommittees is listed in Appendix D.

The subcommittees met regularly throughout the semester. We researched college websites and talked to deans. We read the relevant literature for examples of best practice. We surveyed the department chairs. We looked to national (and international) organizations to produce definitions and learning outcomes for each component of the Core Curriculum. We began to develop the nuts and bolts of an implementation plan. The goals of the Core Curriculum and a mission statement are to be found in Appendix B of this report, and the goals and learning outcomes of the different elements of the core in Appendix C. The document we passed last September is in Appendix A.

The subcommittees produced reports and the group as a whole arrived at a consensus document in February 2007. We submitted this report to the Academic Planning Committee, the Curriculum Committee, the Faculty Senate, the Department Chairs, the Provost's Office, the Student Life Office, the Admissions Office, and the Office of the Registrar. A document incorporating that feedback was then presented to the faculty in a general meeting (on April 24) and more feedback was gathered. This document incorporates that feedback. It was then vetted one last time with the Core Curriculum Implementation Committee. We are submitting this, the final report, to the Faculty Senate and to the Provost's Office, with e-mail copies to all faculty and all staff.

A. General Recommendations

B. Specific recommendations for each element of the core curriculum

1. Fundamental Liberal Arts Skills
2. Introduction to the Liberal Arts: First-Year Seminars
3. International Languages
4. Liberal Arts Approaches to Understanding the World
5. Experiencing the Liberal Arts in the World

C. Transfer student issues

D. Timeline

E. Questions and Answers

F. Appendices

Appendix A – New Core Curriculum passed by Faculty in September, 2007 and its 3 appendices

Appendix B – Core Curriculum Goals and Mission Statement

Appendix C – Goals and Learning Outcomes for Each Element of the Core Curriculum

Appendix D – Composition of Core Curriculum Implementation Committee

Appendix E – List of Current Courses that Will Fulfill the "Liberal Arts Approaches to Understanding the World" Requirement of the New Core Curriculum

Appendix F – Curriculum Committee recommendations regarding the relationship between the Core Curriculum and the new Core Curriculum Committee

A. GENERAL RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPLEMENTING THE CORE CURRICULUM

1. We recommend that the new Core Curriculum go into effect in the fall of 2008 (the recommendations in this report are predicated on that date). We acknowledge the possibility, however, that unforeseen challenges could force a postponement to fall of 2009. We recommend that October 1, 2007 be the date when the College decides whether to forge ahead or postpone.
2. We recommend establishing a new administrative position, a Dean of the First-Year Experience and Core Curriculum. (Note: This recommendation is already in the process of being partially implemented as funds have been found to support an internally-hired dean for the initial implementation period.) This dean will work with the Core Curriculum Committee (see recommendation #3) as he or she attends to the administrative aspects of the Core Curriculum, including scheduling first-year seminars, setting up faculty development workshops, attending to assessment issues, establishing training for student seminar leaders in conjunction with student life personnel and faculty, fostering connection between the core curriculum and student life and with the world outside the College, and so forth. We anticipate that this person be in place by summer 2007. The first task of the dean will be to determine a detailed timeline for taking catalog copy to the Curriculum Committee, for soliciting the list of seminars for Fall 2008, for developing a budget and requesting funding, and for attending to many other logistical and administrative details.
3. We recommend instituting a Core Curriculum Committee (CCC), which will be a subcommittee of the Curriculum Committee (CC) but with separate membership. It will work in conjunction with the First-Year Experience and Core Curriculum Dean, who will serve as the functional equivalent of a department chair. The CCC will do its regular work without having to get approval by the CC, but it should report periodically to the CC about its activities. This arrangement should be revisited in 3-4 years to determine whether it should continue or whether the CCC should become its own standing committee.

Until such a committee is established, the Curriculum Committee will shoulder these responsibilities.

The CCC will:

- approve first year seminars;
- approve new courses for the breadth and the “experiences in the world” requirements;
- direct the assessment of components of the Core Curriculum;
- coordinate planning and implementation of faculty developmental workshops;
- attend to other related issues regarding implementation and ongoing development of the core curriculum, including how new student enrollment patterns impact departments.

The relationship between the CCC and the CC is spelled out in Appendix E.

4. We recommend establishing permanent funding within the College’s budget to support on-going faculty development, in the form of workshops, outside speakers, travel to related conferences, etc. Support for faculty will target different elements of the core curriculum, including the development of first-year seminars, the teaching and assessment of the four liberal arts skills, the revision of courses currently fulfilling the breadth requirement and the development of new ones, and the development of service and experiential learning courses and of study tours and off-campus internships. The workshops will be directed by both on- and off-campus faculty experts,

and faculty will be compensated for participation. Faculty development will be flexible in terms of time, giving faculty several opportunities throughout the academic year and during the summer for participation.

5. We recommend the establishment of a repository of teaching resources for faculty. This recommendation includes a specially designated place to house it.
6. We recommend that the work that faculty do towards core curriculum enhancement count seriously towards tenure, promotion, and merit pay.
7. For various reasons, including limited spaces in the seminars, we recommend that students already enrolled at the College not be allowed to switch to the new catalog and take the new Core Curriculum in place of the current General Education Curriculum.

B. RECOMMENDATIONS REGARDING DIFFERENT ELEMENTS OF THE CORE CURRICULUM

1. Fundamental Liberal Arts Skills

Under the new Core Curriculum, in order to graduate a student must achieve competence in critical thinking, written expression, oral expression, and information literacy. By calling on the majors to teach these skills, the Core Curriculum is essentially saying that students will learn to write, speak, think, and gather information as biologists, economists, arts scholars, historians, etc. The idea that, having learned these skills in one field, students can then transfer them to another, is a core premise of a liberal arts education.

Of all the curriculum changes, this is the most far-reaching and challenging—the one that will require the most faculty commitment and the most College resources. It is also the one that may most transform the College and elevate it to the next level of excellence. While many faculty already teach the four skills, either explicitly or implicitly, the new core curriculum calls us as an institution to be more intentional in how we do so and how we insure that our students demonstrate progress in developing and ultimately achieving proficiency in these skills by the end of their senior year. This is the aspect of our new core curriculum that most excites the Maryland Higher Education Commission, which is deeply concerned about how the state’s colleges and universities, by simply assigning a skills course here or there, are failing to deeply instill these skills in their students.

This is also the area that has caused the most consternation amongst the faculty, who are aware of how deficient many of our students are in these four skills and who worry about the extra pressures that focusing on them will place on faculty. It is important to stress, therefore, that teaching the four skills will evolve over time, sometimes slowly; that it will probably develop unevenly between departments since some have more experience teaching certain of the skills than others; and that the institution must support faculty fully in this endeavor.

The following commonalities tie the four skills together:

- All four skills will be developed over four years.
- All four are interrelated and reflexive in various and interdisciplinary ways.
- All these skills will be tied directly to the core curriculum mission statement.
- All these skills will be introduced, practiced, and promoted during first-year seminars.
- All these skills involve cognitive, social, and ethical aspects.
- All these skills will be practiced and assessed in both formal and informal ways.

In our vision, the new requirement will instill a culture of “all four skills in all four years that will be developed over time.” Students will first be made aware of the College’s emphasis on these skills through such venues as the College website, Admissions literature and open houses, and orientation and advising programming by Academic Services and Student Life. They will be instructed in these skills in the first-year seminars. After that, each academic major will embed strategies for further developing and for assessing proficiency in these skills with the goal of having them come to fruition in the St. Mary’s Project and capstone courses and beyond. In other words, students begin to understand this culture before they arrive on campus, become immersed in it during their time on campus, and further develop these skills once they leave the campus.

To the mantra “all four skills in all four years,” we have added, “that will be developed over time.” The skills do not need to be explicitly taught and assessed in every class, which would be an undue burden on teachers. But if the College and if departments are, as a whole, intentional about skill development, then the instruction will be shared, and the expectations communicated, by all. If we are successful, then we can begin to expect, as a matter of course, senior projects that are well written, reasoned, researched and presented—projects where faculty do not have to give their students last minute crash courses in writing or public speaking or research methods.

Just as it will take time for students to develop their skills, it will take time for the new skills culture to develop at the College. We will do a better job at teaching the skills with each passing year. To begin laying the groundwork for the implementation, we are recommending that the departments survey their faculty to find out how they are already attending to the four skills, either explicitly or implicitly. This knowledge will form the basis for the departmental plans, where we are recommending that departments examine their courses and determine where skills should be taught explicitly, where implicitly, where deliberately assessed, where informally practiced, and so on. Departments must be supported, both in developing their plans and in carrying them through. To that end, we are recommending that the current Writing Center evolve into an enhanced “Center for Excellence in the Liberal Arts” and that it hire Master’s level experts and specially train students to support faculty and students. We are also recommending the training of “Faculty Writing Fellows” who would be awarded fellowships to learn about skills instruction and practices in order to develop writing courses within their specific disciplines.

While departments will need to work together to develop a campus-wide side of expectations about what constitutes skills proficiency, the departmental plans may differ according to particular department needs. Most plans will probably involve benchmark courses, portfolios, or some combination of the two, and departments should be given the necessary support in the up-coming year (including specially funded workshops) to develop them. Students will first be introduced to the skills in their first-year seminars, and, since they must demonstrate their progress at various times over the next four years, they will need to have a means for archiving their work. At its simplest, this could involve saving all written work to one of the College’s servers, to be retrieved later by the students for reflection and assessment when they are gathering evidence that they have attained skills proficiency. Saving aural and visual material, such as evidence of oral expression, is more complicated and potentially more expensive (if stored on the College’s servers). The Information Technology office needs to be involved in these discussions from the very beginning.

Since some departments interested in portfolios may be deterred by the prospect of mounds of paper, scores of computer files, and overwhelmed assessors, some words need to be said on the topic. If done intelligently, a portfolio is a powerful learning tool for the student and not an undue burden on faculty. First of all, students, not faculty, are largely responsible for compiling their portfolios to prove that they can, in fact, think critically, write well, etc. The Center for Excellence in the Liberal Arts will play an active role in supporting students in this endeavor. To make his or her case, the student must

engage in an exercise of self-examination that is at the heart of learning. With guidance, students would select a limited number of examples of their work for their portfolios. This work will often have been produced in certain benchmark classes (including the first-year seminars) and may have been geared towards a rubric and assessed by a teacher. In these instances, a later assessor might simply note the grade it has received and move on. The clearer we are about skills assessment within specially designated classes, the clearer the student is about his or her performance and the easier the overall task of assessment becomes, both for students and for faculty.

Assessment of a student's skills proficiency would occur at different points during his or her career. One point would probably be at the end of the sophomore year, when he or she will have completed introductory courses within the major as well as most of the core courses. Assessment at this point might happen during the summer when volunteer faculty could be trained (and paid well!) to read student work. (Such training has the added advantage of further developing a cross-campus set of standards.) Skilled experts attached to the Center for Excellence in the Liberal Arts could also be involved in this process. A second point is towards the end of a student's junior year, when the departments assess the proficiency achieved by their majors and designate individual learning strategies for those students who are coming up short. (If the student is maintaining a portfolio, the entire portfolio would not necessarily need to be assessed at this point.) If a department's students are divided evenly amongst all faculty, the burden on individual faculty is lessened. (Again, this examination has the advantage of helping departments become clearer about the skill levels they want from their students.) Finally, performance, and perhaps a final reflective essay, would be examined during the senior year. In many cases, not more than a cursory glance would be necessary. The students, meanwhile, will benefit from reflecting upon progress over their four years.

The document we passed last September included an English Department recommendation that, although not strictly a part of the core curriculum, is nevertheless intertwined with it. First-year seminar teachers may not be prepared to handle the severe writing deficiencies of some of our least prepared students, who should continue to enroll in Introduction to Writing (English 101). We recommend that these students simultaneously enroll in English 101 and the first-year seminars and that, if it seems necessary, that they also meet regularly with specially trained student writing tutors who are familiar with the assignments the students are encountering in the seminars. After the courses, depending on mid-semester and end-of-semester assessment in English 101, some of these students should be required to take further instruction in writing, whether English 102: Composition or tutorial work in the Center for Excellence in the Liberal Arts.

If the faculty, who are overworked as it is, do not receive adequate support in the implementation of the skills requirement, the College runs the risk of resentment and noncompliance. We saw this happen with the old "Q" and "W" requirements and do not want to repeat that experience. Critical to the change, therefore, is an enhanced Center for Excellence where faculty and students are adequately supported. The specific additions to the current Writing Center will need to be worked out in detail, but we see them as having two major components:

- (1) specialists with advanced degrees. Ideally these would include three writing experts (with expertise in writing in the sciences, in the social sciences, and in the arts and humanities); a fourth reference librarian, to help with information literacy (a position that the College lost when Celia Rabinowitz became head librarian); and an expert in critical thinking and oral expression; and

- (2) student writing fellows in all the different disciplines, trained in the Center for Excellence in the Liberal Arts.

We are aware that the recommendations concerning skills implementation involve considerable expense. But as this requirement is the most far-ranging of the new Core Curriculum recommendations, expense is to be expected. We may not be able to do all the hiring we want all at once—the College must work these into its five-year strategic plan—but it is essential that we follow through with them in the long term.

2. Introduction to the Liberal Arts: First-Year Seminars

The new Core Curriculum requires each student to take a 15-person seminar. These courses are to introduce students to liberal arts culture and to the campus community. The seminars will show students how written expression, oral expression, critical thinking, and information literacy allow them to engage deeply with an intellectual topic. The seminars are not meant to be introductions to a discipline, nor are they the “College 101” courses that many colleges have. Rather, they are academic topics courses focusing on a question, an issue, or a group of texts.

We are already seeing enthusiasm amongst the faculty who will pilot versions of the seminars in fall 2007. The pilot teachers regard the seminars as opportunities to explore topics that excite their passion (and, in some case, topics that they have not had the opportunity to teach before). Grinnell College recommends to us that faculty sometimes consider teaching topics that are new to them so that they learn along with their students.

In the pilot seminars there is excitement as well about the small size of the classes and about the chance to speak to the energy and idealism of entering students. Because of the seminar’s potential to foster personal connections between students and faculty, to initiate students into academic discourse, and to generate commitment to the liberal arts enterprise, we are recommending that the seminars be seen as the College’s gateway course and that all entering students enroll in them in their first semester.

Our research into other colleges with first-year seminars indicates that it is best, when enrolling students, to ask for their top five choices. Virtually everyone receives one of their top three, and colleges like Grinnell report that satisfaction is high regardless of which class the students receive. We recommend that, as in these other schools, students be placed in their seminars before they register for their other courses, thereby receiving the message that the seminars are not add-ons but are foundational to their education.

Reports from other colleges also indicate that registration becomes a very difficult task if classes are scattered across the class schedule. (One college that tried and then abandoned this approach used the word “nightmare.”) From a registration point of view, the easiest option is to schedule all the seminars, and only the seminars, during a single time slot. Grinnell College, for instance, teaches its seminars at 8-9:50 Tuesday/Thursday, during which time first-year students “own” the campus. Students and the Office of Student Life were particularly excited about a single time slot because it would create a moment of communal time for the rest of the campus, which could be used in a variety of ways. In our initial proposal, we suggested a single time, 12-1:10 Monday/Wednesday/Friday, a time slot that had the additional advantage of not conflicting with Principles of Biology or any of its seven three-hour labs. This is an important consideration given that around a third of the entering class enrolls in POB, posing a direct conflict. We determined that we have enough classrooms (just barely) to accommodate in a single time slot the 32 sections that would be needed for a 480-person entering class.

However, we came to realize that one cannot import one practice wholesale from another college, and for a number of reasons it does not appear that a single time slot would work at St. Mary’s. International language classes rely heavily on the three-day-a-week matrix, certain faculty (for a variety

of disciplinary-based reasons) prefer the longer slots to the shorter, and others resist the significant disruptions to their schedules that would occur the semester they were teaching the seminar. We concluded that there had to be a trade-off. On the one hand, students had to have the opportunity to take their preferred course without having to worry whether it conflicted with a core or a disciplinary gateway course that they wanted or needed. On the other hand, faculty wanted more flexibility. We are therefore recommending a limited number of slots that will balance the needs of students, faculty, and the Records Office.

We will also need to offer two or three seminars for students entering the college in the spring. (We are recommending that these seminars be required of all transfer students entering the College with first-year academic status, i.e., fewer than 32 credits.) These courses can be taught at agreed upon times within the matrix. If one is taught Tuesday/Thursday, another should be taught Monday/Wednesday or Monday/Wednesday/Friday.

While some faculty may teach the seminars yearly, we suspect that most will teach one every second or third year. Our hope is that as many faculty as possible will teach them. We are recommending that all faculty except for visiting and adjunct faculty should be eligible to teach these seminars, and we are asking that all departments offer at least one seminar a year (although there may be occasional exceptions for the smallest departments). Many departments will teach two or three, which will be more possible once they start teaching fewer introductory courses. It will be the Dean's responsibility to work with departments to come up with the needed sections.

We are also recommending that first-year seminars have student seminar leaders or assistants, who we see as critical in fostering an academic culture amongst the students outside the classroom. Determining the responsibilities of these students will be an evolving process—the pilot seminars will be employing student assistants and will give us a better sense of the needs they can address and the opportunities that they open. In addition to supporting the goals of the seminar, these students should be involved in August orientation (whose academic component can now involve entering students meeting with their teachers), and we recommend that they help monitor a “fifth hour requirement” that we are proposing. The faculty instructors, in conjunction with the Student Life Office and the Core Curriculum Dean, will be involved in the selection of these assistants. The students will be trained and will receive academic credit for their work, and it will be considered an honor to be chosen.

Our recommendation regarding seminar leaders has drawn some excellent questions from the Curriculum Committee, which notes that we need a campus-wide discussion on the issue of student assistants. The Curriculum Committee has asked the Faculty Senate to come up with a policy on and guidelines for student assistants, and we second this request. A first step could be examining practices by departments that are already using student assistants, as well as experiences in this fall pilot first-year seminars.

The (non-credit) fifth-hour requirement that we are recommending calls for students to attend several extra-curricular learning opportunities of diverse sorts, such as workshops, lectures, performances, colloquia, etc. that are mindfully selected to allow for a breadth of experience. The “fifth hour” proposal, a variant of a focused proposal made by Katharina Von Kellenbach last spring when we were revising the curriculum, took new root in discussions between the CCIC Subcommittee on First-Year Seminars and the Student Life Office. Both were looking for ways to make connections between the core curriculum and campus life. Wanting to encourage such connections without, at the same time, mandating them to the faculty teaching the seminars, we chose to recommend that these activities be assigned by the faculty member only if he or she is interested. If not, students will choose them from a list of possibilities (with, as we said, attendance monitored by the student seminar leader).

We recommend that faculty teaching the courses be reimbursed for the developmental work that they undertake. We also recommend that funds be provided for first-year seminar faculty to create informal opportunities for seminar members to gather, such as meals as a group or off-campus events.

3. International Languages

Under the new Core Curriculum, students will take one international language course beyond their entering level of proficiency as part of the core curriculum. There should be minimal implementation challenges with this change since, according to the Department of International Languages and Cultures, the major effect will be to redistribute current enrollments, with fewer students in the (often overcrowded) 100-level courses and more students in the (sometimes undersubscribed) 200-level courses. The overall increase is estimated to be slightly smaller than the overall decrease.

ILC recommends the following exemptions to the international languages requirement:

1. As is current practice, international students or anyone else with significant linguistic and cultural background from outside the US can petition the chair of the Dept. of International Languages and Cultures for exemption.
2. Students with documented learning challenges who currently have exemption through consultation with Academic Services will continue to be able to select an alternative course in English in coordination with the chair of International Languages and Cultures.
3. College-level language courses that students transfer to St. Mary's from other institutions fulfill the language requirement, as they do now. Corollary: as now, students can fulfill the requirement with a language not taught in the Department of International Languages and Cultures.
4. Those students who do not fulfill the language requirement with a course at St. Mary's or one of the above exceptions should contact the chair of International Languages and Cultures to discuss options that best suit the student's educational goals.

4. Liberal Arts Approaches to Understanding the World

To fulfill the Core Curriculum breadth requirement, a student must take one course from each of the following six headings: Mathematics, Natural Sciences, Social Sciences, Arts, Cultural Studies, and Humanistic Foundations. The purpose of this requirement is to introduce students to academic disciplines central to the liberal arts and the methodological approaches and assumptions used in these disciplines. The purposes of these requirements are to:

- provide a background for further study in the liberal arts;
- continue to build liberal art skills of critical thinking, written expression, oral expression and information literacy;
- encourage the pursuit of life-long learning;
- foster the development of educated members of the community and the world.

Because the Liberal Arts Approaches to Understand the World (LAAUW) requirements are similar to current GEC requirements, we expect fewer logistical and administrative problems implementing and overseeing these components than in other elements of the Core Curriculum. However, the lack of review and assessment of our current GEC has long been a problem, and we believe

we must take a more proactive approach, under the leadership of the Core Curriculum Committee, to administering to this component of the Core Curriculum.

Presently, we believe that this requirement can be satisfied largely by existing courses. By looking at the current catalog and examining responses we received from department chairs, we have arrived at the list provided in Appendix E. This list is just a first step and courses are sure to be added (and perhaps subtracted). We are recommending that, where appropriate, certain individual courses may satisfy more than one category, and that, when a course falls under two categories, the student may choose which category the course may fulfill. (In the Appendix E list, one may see several of these courses, especially under Cultural Studies.) However, a student may not count a particular course as fulfilling more than one breadth requirement, nor may he or she fulfill multiple breadth requirements within a single discipline. We are also recommending that, while allowing for necessary exceptions, the breadth requirement be satisfied with 100- and 200-level courses without prerequisites.

We are recommending that the disciplinary “homes,” the groupings of different disciplines under different approaches labels (found in the parentheses following the descriptions of the different approaches), eventually be dropped as, in some instances, overly restrictive. We see homes as necessary at this stage of the implementation process, however, in that they offer a framework for disciplines to gather and discuss area definitions and goals. There is also a pragmatic rationale for the homes: they ensure even representation across the disciplines. Although some disciplines have claimed that they offer courses that could satisfy as many as four of the disciplinary categories, most faculty want to see students taking an even distribution of disciplines across the campus and do not, for instance, wish to see students fulfilling all of their breadth requirements within Montgomery and Schaefer Halls. Pragmatically, departments may also wish to ask themselves why they would want to teach courses in multiple homes given the demands they will face to teach first-year seminars and, perhaps, increased numbers of upper-division courses.

While the document passed by the faculty provides definitions for each area and while this CCIC report (in response to a request from the department chairs) has articulated tentative goals, *the disciplines contributing to the different areas should meet to affirm, refine, or change the definitions and goals and to agree to the courses fulfilling the requirement*. These conversations should occur in consultation with the Core Curriculum Committee, with final decisions made in time for the 2008-09 catalog. For the most part, we have not been engaging in these interdisciplinary conversations with our current GEC, despite initial resolutions to do so. The new Core Curriculum gives us an opportunity to engage in an activity that we should have been doing for years and that is at the core of the liberal arts enterprise.

One of the approaches presents particular implementation challenges. “Cultural Studies,” which some would like to label “Cultural Perspectives,” does not have the tradition or the clarity of the other labels. Intended to provide a home for ILC and some of the interdisciplinary special study areas and to function as a kind of diversity requirement, it has instead sowed confusion and some conflict. Disciplines like Religious Studies, Anthropology, and Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies have found themselves torn between this home and others. Some faculty would like to see this requirement moved from the “Approaches” category altogether and put in another part of the Core Curriculum, say, a diversity requirement such as many Colleges have. Debates will continue regardless: while most agree that students must study cultural diversity, how “culture” and how “diversity” are defined varies from discipline to discipline and even within disciplines. At the very least, this area, more than the others, needs to be seen as an open home that allows a wide variety of different disciplinary contributions. An initial sampling of possible courses has been included in appendix E, but disciplines interested in the requirement will need to get together to recommend courses and definitions. Any changes to the core curriculum, whether it involve changing the name of a category or moving the requirement to a different part of the curriculum, will need to be passed by the faculty as a whole.

5. Experiencing the Liberal Arts in the World

The new Core Curriculum requires students to have an academic experience (4-credits worth) outside the classroom. Few experiences are as powerful as taking one's knowledge and applying it in the world through direct participation in the events of life. What students learn in class has meaning beyond what they write in examinations, assignments and research papers. Students must engage in experiences beyond the academic environment that allow them to engage in critical thinking, making connections between their ideas and the world, observing and reflecting on the validity of those ideas, reforming their ideas in light of their reflections, and testing the reformed ideas in new situations and through academic work. Students who engage successfully in this process are well on their way to becoming lifelong learners.

We are recommending that the requirement can be satisfied in four ways, each of which must have a significant off-campus dimension. Other ways are possible if they gain the approval of the Core Curriculum Committee:

1. Studying abroad: Students attend a semester-long SMCM study abroad program or a study-tour course taught by SMCM faculty. Other study abroad programs require pre-approval to ensure they fulfill all requirements.
2. Completing a course that has a significant experiential or service learning component. These courses will need to be approved by the Core Curriculum Committee.
3. Participating in a work experience: Students organize an internship (credit, paid or volunteer) in cooperation with the Office of Internships, or participate in a work experience that has been pre-approved by the Dean of the Core Curriculum.
4. Completing an independent study under faculty direction in a community organization: Students organize an independent study in cooperation with a faculty member that has been pre-approved by the Dean of the Core Curriculum.

A key aspect of this requirement is the academic component where students reflect upon and synthesize the experience. If the experience occurs within the context of a course, then the teacher just has to be sure to integrate it with the course content. One option for study abroad experiences, especially those not attached to a course or program, are the pre- and post-study abroad courses (two credits each) currently being designed by the International Council. Mentored internships, such as those conducted through the Internship Office, will need a research essay (as is current practice) to insure that students reflect upon the experience and make academic connections.

When a faculty member mentors an internship or supervises an independent study that a student is undertaking to fulfill this core requirement, we are recommending that he or she receive course equivalence when the mentoring occurs during the school year, with 18 mentored internships/independent studies equaling one course equivalency. (During the summer, as is currently the practice, faculty receive payment.) We recommend faculty developmental workshops and clearer guidelines about internships (and expectations of mentors) so that faculty will have a clearer sense of what is required. The new Core Curriculum Dean and the Core Curriculum Committee should attend to these matters.

We also recommend that, to fulfill this requirement, students should either have attained junior standing, completed their other core requirements, or received approval by the Dean to do it earlier. Thus, we will need to have sufficient opportunities in place by fall 2010 for students to fulfill this requirement. We also suggest that, similar to SMP presentation days, there be gatherings where students have the opportunity to share their experiences with the College community.

C. Transfer student issues

While it is not possible to encompass all issues regarding transfer students in a document such as this one, we recommend the following general guidelines:

Students transferring in with first-year status (under 32 credits) should enroll in the first-year seminars unless they have taken a comparable course elsewhere.

We recommend that other transfer students (those with more than 32 credits) should take specially designed "Introduction to the Liberal Arts Skills at St. Mary's" courses, which should be at the 300-level. These courses will introduce them to the four skills and impart the vision of the liberal arts.

The current college policy concerning transfer credit should apply to the breadth requirement.

Students who transfer in with an AA degree are exempt from the International Languages and the breadth requirements (as is current practice) but must fulfill the junior-level "Experiencing the Liberal Arts in the World" requirement (just as, until this past year, they had to fulfill the "Values Inquiry" requirement).

D. TIMELINE FOR IMPLEMENTATION OF CORE CURRICULUM

[Note: This is a tentative timeline, provided as much to give a sense of the implementation issues before us as to give a concrete set of dates. Once a new Dean of the First-Year Experience and Core Curriculum is hired and begins working with a Core Curriculum Committee, and once the faculty teaching the first round of pilot first year seminars begin to report back on their experiences and their needs, the timeline can be refined. As noted in our general recommendation #1, if the College, and especially the new Dean and the Core Curriculum Committee, concludes (by October 1, 2007) that a single year of implementation is too tight a timeframe, we will postpone implementation to Fall 2009.]

Spring semester 2007: Pilot seminars are chosen; student seminar leaders for pilots are chosen; Dean of First-Year Experience and Core Curriculum is hired; new Core Curriculum is presented to MHEC

Spring and Summer 2007: Workshops held for pilot first-year seminar instructors

June 2007: Dean of FYCC begins work; College representatives will attend conference on "Developing Faculty and Professional Learning Committees"

Fall semester 2007: Core Curriculum Committee is established and begins meeting; Faculty Writing Fellows are chosen and participate in workshops; departments survey their faculty to determine where in their curricula fundamental skills are already being taught ("skills inventory"); departments identify and designate as such any service and experiential learning courses taught by the department; departments and special study areas, meeting together with others who service the same areas within the Liberal Arts Approaches to Understanding the World breadth requirement, confirm or revise definitions and learning outcomes for their categories, and finalize the list of courses that students can take

October 1, 2007: Decision is made whether or not to postpone the Core Curriculum by a year. The dates below assume that Fall 2008 is the implementation date.

November 2007: Catalog copy for new Core Curriculum is due to the Curriculum Committee

December 2007: Skills inventories are due from departments as part of the budget and planning document; Dean of FYCC submits budget to Strategic Planning Committee

January 2008: First-year seminars are announced for fall 2008

Spring semester 2008: Preliminary workshops, which include instructors of 2007 pilot courses as workshop leaders, are held for those developing first year seminars; student seminar leaders are chosen; student writing fellows are chosen

May 2008: Developmental workshops are held for first-year seminar instructors and for student writing fellows

June 2008: Entering students send in seminar preferences and are assigned to sections

July 2008: Entering students visit campus and register for other courses

August 2008: During orientation activities, students meet with their seminar teachers and student seminar leaders

September 2008: Departmental plans are due for fundamental liberal arts skills instruction and assessment

September 2009: Departmental plans are due for ways their majors can meet the “experiencing the liberal arts in the world” requirement (although this requirement does not have to be satisfied within the major)

Continuous –

--liberal arts skills developmental workshops, beginning in Spring 2008

--assessment of student learning and of all elements of the Core Curriculum

E. Questions, Concerns, and Responses

The following questions and concerns have arisen in the course of our formulation of this report. Whether our responses are found to be satisfactory or not will probably vary from individual to individual, but they will at least give a sense of the thinking of the Committee and how we arrived at the recommendations that we did.

Concern: The implementation plan advocates skills instruction throughout the curriculum. However, beyond the first-year seminar, it makes no accommodations for such instruction within the core curriculum.

Response: Since the Core Curriculum defines skills in terms of disciplines, we see it as up to the departments to determine how much skills instruction there will be at each stage of the way, including in the courses that satisfy the breadth requirements. In the breadth courses that double as gateway courses (e.g., Introduction to Psychology, Introduction to Economics), departments will undoubtedly want to start introducing their majors to the skills they need. Presumably, even in courses like Introduction to Literature or Contemporary Bioscience—in other words, courses that are not gateway courses to the major—faculty will want students to have some sense, however rudimentary, of what it means to write, speak, think and research in that field.

Question: If we’re calling for students to achieve competence in written expression, oral expression, critical thinking, and information literacy, why has quantitative reasoning been left out? Isn’t that just as fundamental a skill?

Response: At least four people have asked us this question. In one way, this is not an implementation question but a question that concerns the document that we passed last September. But in another way it is an implementation issue because it involves how we define the skills. By defining the skills in terms of discipline, the Core Curriculum asks each department to concentrate on what it wants its majors to achieve by the end of their senior year. If a department wants its students to be able to interpret graphs or understand statistics, it can include that under its list of expectations. Non-majors may get a taste of such skills in an introductory economics or psychology class, just as non-majors may get a taste of poetic expression in an introductory English class. But not all majors ask their students to interpret graphs or

write poems, whereas all majors ask their students to write, speak, think, and research. “Fundamental,” in other words, refers to the general skills that all majors have in common.

Question: I have polled people who are familiar with the process, and the numbers I am getting are between 500k to \$1 million to implement the curriculum. I am afraid, without the resources, it will be the same story as it was when SMPs were implemented.

Response: For the first five years, we anticipate the cost of training and academic support per year, excluding the costs for study abroad, to be in the neighborhood of \$110,000. Rather than add the entire figure to the budget all at once, we anticipate ramping up academic spending each year. The Provost’s Office has committed to requesting increases in spending beyond the up-coming five years and also anticipates asking for more faculty lines (in addition to the 18 that were budgeted several years ago and that we are still allotting and filling).

Concern: It is disingenuous to argue that professors outside of the field of English will do a better job at teaching students how to write than those within the discipline. I personally have too much respect for English professors and our students to pass myself off as someone qualified to teach writing.

Response: The English faculty are flattered by the confidence that this faculty member and others have expressed in their ability to teach writing. If a single well-taught writing class taken during a student’s first year were sufficient, then it would indeed be foolish to have dropped the Composition requirement. But writing, like piano playing, atrophies if it is not reinforced over and over, and even with our current composition requirement, faculty throughout the College are frustrated at the level of writing they are seeing in their seniors. A number of these faculty, with little institutional support, have been working to improve their students’ writing skills.

We realize that many people do not feel fully qualified to teach writing, which is why we are recommending significant institutional support in this area. When we had a “W” requirement, faculty attended a couple of workshops and then were essentially thrown out on their own. With a “Faculty Writing Fellows” program that pays faculty to develop writing components within courses that they teach; with a more robust writing center and M.A.-level writing experts to support faculty; and with regular writing instruction workshops that faculty may attend (and be paid for doing so), we anticipate that the ability to teach writing will improve. Perhaps not all faculty will participate and the process will take years, but with an institution-wide commitment, our belief is that the overall quality of student writing will eventually go up.

Question: What if we have problems with the report’s recommended definitions and goals?

Response: Concerns have been expressed about the definitions and goals in a number of different areas, including oral expression, information literacy, cultural studies, and humanistic foundations. The CCIC provided Approaches goals at the request of the department chairs, who wanted something to “push against.” It would be remarkable if a single Committee, no matter how representative, could have gotten everything right. It is important to remember that the Core Curriculum is meant to be an on-going conversation. Our recommended definitions and goals provide a place to start, but ultimately it is up to the faculty to modify them as they work together to put them into practice. If, for example, this report makes unrealistic expectations with regard to oral delivery, those goals will need to be changed.

Concern: Reading through the entire CCIC document and noting the demands of assessment, workshops, new preparations, co-curricular activities, TA training, collaboration, summertime activities, and oversight, I seriously fear that my already-postponed plans for scholarship will never come to fruition. The larger problem, of course, is that, given all these new demands on top of the huge time

commitment of mentoring SMPs (plus teaching and service loads that are untypically heavy), the College will need to review the newly-adopted bylaws for faculty review in order to reflect its shift in focus from scholarly activity to teaching. Implementation of this curriculum will absolutely require a corresponding reduction of expectations for scholarly activity by faculty members and will produce a (downward) shift in our applicant pool for searches.

Response: Not all faculty will be involved in all activities. Someone teaching a first-year seminar may choose not to be a Faculty Writing Fellow the same year. A faculty member may choose certain years to attend faculty development workshops and not others. But it is true that assessment will involve all faculty. However, it is worth noting that it is not only the Core Curriculum that is calling upon the College to engage in assessment. We are also receiving calls to do so from Middle States, MHEC, and, potentially, the U.S. Department of Education. The Core Curriculum helps us focus our assessment efforts upon the areas that we find important.

We agree that the College has underfunded SMPs and we are determined not to let that happen in this instance. Many of us on the Committee are sympathetic with the proposal to reduce scholarship expectations in order to give faculty more time to dedicate to their teaching.

Concern: I am concerned about the prospect of our weakest and least motivated students taking the path of least resistance to fulfill the “Experiencing the Liberal Arts in the World” requirement and flooding into classes with a service or experiential learning component. This could be a disaster for the pedagogical goals of those courses. And regarding internships and independent studies with outside agencies, it is one thing if the students are volunteering, another if they are participating only because it is a requirement. This could be a disaster for the outside agency, and those very public disasters will stay in the minds of the outside community much longer than the successes of the other students who really benefit from this kind of activity.

Response: These are legitimate concerns. In fact, the CCIC subcommittee studying the “Experiences” requirement generated three pages of things that could go wrong. Other concerns include College liability for students studying overseas, issues of students commuting to community sites, and the like. The new Dean will need to formulate a risk management plan. The subcommittee report, not included here because we didn’t want to overwhelm readers, will be forwarded to the new Core Curriculum Dean, and faculty are welcome to see it if they request it. The larger point to be made here is that we have to trust our abilities to anticipate and solve such problems, and the Dean (along with the Core Curriculum Committee) will insure that there is oversight. (We at this school are not used to having someone assigned fulltime to oversee the Core Curriculum.) St. Mary’s includes “experiential learning” in its mission statement because we understand how powerful a learning tool it is, but inevitably there are risks when our students leave our classrooms and enter the world. We believe the risks are worth it, but we need to be smart about them.

Regarding the specific points here. Given the pay-offs that come with experiential and service learning, departments will be encouraged to create more courses so that all the burden doesn’t fall on a few courses. That being said, maybe our weakest and least motivated students will be most served by experiential learning courses, which could help them see the value of their studies in a new way. It is certainly important to screen students to ensure good community relations, as the internship office does now. We are recommending that either that office or the Dean approve all independent studies within the community to lessen the likelihood of disasters.

Question: Why hasn’t the faculty been allowed to vote on this implementation plan?

Response: Calling this a plan was a mistake on our part. It is really a report, generated by faculty, administrators and students in consultation with the community and containing recommendations on how to implement the new Core Curriculum. As such, it now goes to the Faculty Senate, which will identify any issues that need a faculty vote (such as, for instance, the formation of a new Core Curriculum Committee). It will also go to the Provost's office, which is in charge of administrative matters, and to a few other offices that are involved, including the Office of Student Life and the Registrar.

Concern: I think we should resist the urge to go "Full Monty" on the implementation.

Response: The first major decision, whether to implement the Core Curriculum in fall 2008 or fall 2009, will be made on October 1, 2007. The Dean and the Curriculum Committee should have a clearer sense by that time whether it is precipitous or not to choose the earlier date. But to continue the metaphor, in some ways Core Curriculum implementation is set up to be more like a strip tease than a full monty display. The question is at what pace and with what intensity will faculty engage in the conversations that are necessary. Many faculty want the process to start sooner rather than later because the conversations will become less abstract and more focused once we are actually enacting the new curriculum. But the Dean should monitor the health of the process and make sure that faculty are not feeling overtaxed (or at least not more overtaxed than they normally feel). In short, even if we implement in fall 2008, there will be no frontal nudity.

F. Appendices

Appendix A – The New Core Liberal Arts Curriculum and its three appendices, as passed by the St. Mary's faculty April 25 2006 and September 12, 2006

I. Fundamental Liberal Arts Skills

Critical thinking, written expression, oral expression, and information literacy are the cornerstones of a traditional liberal arts education and are essential to an integrative curriculum. All students in all majors employ them throughout their academic careers. Making sure that all students achieve proficiency in these skills will lead to the "excellent education" that our mission statement calls for.

Students will first be instructed in these skills in the first-year seminar. After that, each academic major will be required to formulate strategies for further developing and for assessing proficiency in these skills. To develop and support faculty in teaching these skills and in teaching the first-year seminars, the College must provide ongoing financial support for course planning, developmental workshops, faculty support groups, support staff, a writing fellows program, and an enhanced writing center. Descriptions of proficiency in the four skill areas and the means by which the College will develop and support faculty in their teaching are laid out in appendix 1.

II. Introduction to the Liberal Arts: First-Year Seminars

Each student will take a small (15 person) seminar during his or her first semester at St. Mary's. Individual faculty members will teach topics courses that will focus on a question, an issue, or a group of texts and that will serve as an introduction to critical thinking. These courses will introduce students to academic culture and expectations, including written expression, oral expression, and information literacy. There may be an opportunity for a few of these seminars (say, two or three) to be team-taught. The means for developing and staffing the seminars, the ways that the seminars can be used to help students make the transition into College life, and sample seminar topics (drawn from Grinnell College, the source for this model) can be found in appendix 2.

III. International Languages

Students will take one international language course beyond entering proficiency as part of the core curriculum. (See appendix 3)

IV. Liberal Arts Approaches to Understanding the World

A student will take one course from each of the following six headings. Disciplines and special studies areas may apply to a GEC committee to teach courses in categories other than those in which they traditionally fall, but students may not repeat a discipline.

- a) **Mathematics**—courses whose object of study is primarily mathematical and abstract systems, using quantitative methodologies (mathematics, computer science);
- b) **Natural Sciences**—courses whose object of study is primarily natural phenomena, using scientific methodologies (biology, chemistry, physics); will include a lab experience;
- c) **Social Sciences**—courses whose object of study is human behavior—individual, in groups, or in cultures—using scientific methodologies (psychology, economics, political science, anthropology, sociology);
- d) **Arts**—courses whose primary object of study is aesthetic media: the forms by which these media express ideas and experiences; the history of those forms, the ideas embodied in them, and the theories used to interpret them; and the creation or performance of new examples of these media (music, art, art history, literature, theatre, film, and other media)
- e) **Cultural Studies**—courses whose primary object of study is cultures and languages other than the predominant native culture of students, using the methodologies of language acquisition and/or cultural studies (international languages and cultures, Asian studies, Africa and African Diaspora studies, women, gender and sexuality studies)
- f) **Humanistic Foundations**—courses whose primary object of study is the large-scale paradigms by which humans have tried for thousands of years to make sense of their historical, moral and spiritual relation to the universe (religious studies, philosophy, history)

Rationale: In determining these headings, we turn to the existing disciplines of the university, which represent complex, well-tested methodologies for thinking systematically about particular subject matters.

The six categories are intended to group current academic disciplines, despite inevitable overlap, into areas of study that will give students exposure to current configurations in liberal-arts study. (These configurations, particularly with regard to the inception of cultural studies, have changed in recent years.) The disciplines are divided into the sciences and the humanities. What most divides areas a-c (which use scientific methods) from d-e are the methodological assumptions about what counts as a subject matter and how the observer should interact with it. By and large, the natural and human sciences depend on limiting subject matter to what is empirically observable, shareable, and quantifiable, and restricting the observer from projecting individual, emotional identification onto the subject. Aesthetic and cultural studies, on the other hand, study the “view from inside,” experiences of individual consciousnesses as they are manifested in the symbolic representations of aesthetic forms and in language. Humanistic foundations is separate because the disciplines of history, philosophy, and religion are the original liberal arts disciplines and have for their object of study the sweeping temporal, spiritual/ethical, and logical patterns that underlie study in all the other disciplines.

Courses that will fulfill the requirement: We envision that many of the introductory courses being taught now (such as the 101 courses) can, with minimal changes, be used to satisfy these requirements. To satisfy the requirement they must consciously articulate the methodological assumptions of their disciplines and their choice of representative content.

V. Experiencing the Liberal Arts in the World

Students must have an academic experience outside the classroom.

Rationale: Few experiences are as powerful as taking one's knowledge and applying it in the world. With our proposal that students undergo experiential education or service learning, we are signaling to students that ideas are to engage with and be tested by the world and we want them to try those ideas out. The requirement can be satisfied in a number of ways, including by studying abroad, participating in an internship, doing an independent study in a community organization, or taking a course that has a significant experiential or service learning component (such as "Reflective Practices," "Child in America," and "Language Acquisition" [taught by the education faculty], "Exceptionality" and "Learning Disabilities" [taught by the psychology faculty], or "Cultural Journalism" [taught sometimes by the English faculty, sometimes by the anthropology faculty]).

Appendix 1 of the Core Curriculum passed in September 2006 - Fundamental Liberal Arts Skills

I. Critical Thinking Requirement

Critical thinking is a vital part of a liberal arts education. Linda Elder and Richard Paul, writing for the National Council for Excellence in Critical Thinking, talk about how important it is for teachers to pose and probe student thinking, hold students accountable for their thinking, and teach them to internalize questions that they need to ask themselves. They identify, as the most significant dimensions of critical thinking: clarity, accuracy, precision, relevance, depth, breadth, and logic. Valuable intellectual traits include intellectual humility, intellectual courage, intellectual empathy, intellectual integrity, intellectual perseverance, faith in reason, and fair-mindedness. Teachers will emphasize critical thinking in the first-year seminars, and disciplines will devise strategies to teach and assess critical thinking in their majors.

II. Written Expression Requirement

Our goal is for St. Mary's to become a "Writing-Intensive Institution." Students will achieve a high-level of writing proficiency by receiving more writing practice and writing instruction across all four years of their academic career.

By proficiency we mean that, when they are seniors, students will be able to demonstrate the ability to provide a coherent organization to their writing, as well as present and develop a thesis. They will be able to demonstrate acceptable knowledge of grammar and the mechanics of writing (via copyediting and proofreading). Finally, they will understand that every discipline has its own writing conventions and be able to adapt their writing styles to fit the expectations of the readership.

Currently, the writing requirement is satisfied by taking a single writing course, usually during one's first year. Relatively few students take writing courses after their first year, and a fairly significant number are assigned no major writing tasks until the St. Mary's Project. By moving the writing requirement into the first-year seminars and into the academic majors, we see students achieving a level of proficiency far beyond what they currently demonstrate.

To make this work, however, faculty will have to be supported. If a "Writing across the Curriculum" program is experienced only as an extra burden on faculty (as the College's old W requirement was for many), it will fail. Faculty must have resources they can turn to, including on-going faculty development, an enhanced writing center, trained support staff, and special options for the weaker writers. We include below the English Department's implementation plan for a new writing requirement:

Achieving the Goal

Important note: these changes must be implemented over time and cannot occur all at once

1. A college-wide writing committee will be formed.
2. Writing will receive special attention in first-year seminars.
3. Under-prepared students will take *English 101: Introduction to Composition* in conjunction with the first-year seminars and, in addition, will be required to meet weekly with a Writing Center tutor who is specifically trained to work such students and who is familiar with the writing assignments being used in the first-year seminar. Depending on mid-semester and end-of-semester proficiency exams, some of these students will also be required to take further instruction in writing, whether *English 102: Composition* or tutorial work in the Writing Center.

4. A writing fellows program will be set up for both faculty and students within disciplines. On a regular basis, one faculty member from each department will be awarded a fellowship to learn about writing instruction and practices in order to develop a writing-intensive course within his or her specific disciplines. Departments will also nominate students to serve as writing fellows working in conjunction with the College's Writing Center. These undergraduate writing fellows will be trained in the Writing Center and might work closely with the faculty writing fellow in order to help other students in the major with various writing tasks. Faculty writing fellows will receive stipends for training in how to teach some basics of good writing, how to evaluate student writing, and how to incorporate writing-to-learn activities within the major. Faculty and student writing fellows will be excellent resources for writing-in-the-major programs.
5. Academic departments will create writing-in-the-major programs, which are a formal means within the major to advance students' writing abilities and ability to learn through writing. The College Writing Committee will consult with departments to provide pedagogical support, feedback, and guidance to the program so that departments can (1) clearly define writing goals, outcomes and standards for student writing in the major; (2) develop an evaluation framework for assessing student writing; and (3) develop methods for collective assessing student learning and writing and using the results to improve teaching and student learning.
6. Proficiency will be assessed through electronic portfolios that all students will maintain. Students will be assessed prior to their junior year. If they are underperforming, strategies will be formulated to help bring them up to proficiency. Such strategies might include working closely with the Writing Center on the student's writing portfolio or taking one of the writing electives offered by the English Department (see below). Student electronic portfolios will be assessed again during their senior year.
7. The English Department will teach additional writing electives, on topics such as grammar/style, argumentation, technical writing, and writing in the sciences.

Staffing Impact

The major impact will be the reduction of English 102 sections that the College teaches, from the current 26-28 to around 6-8. (The number of English 101 courses will stay the same.) Because, currently, adjunct faculty teach many of these sections, the English Department will be able to withdraw its request for three and a half more faculty lines, and those lines will instead go to departments experiencing enrollment pressures from students with more elective freedom. Because it is teaching fewer first-year composition courses, English will teach additional writing courses at the 200- and 300-levels, and the regular English faculty may end up teaching more writing courses than they do now. If the faculty determines that it needs more upper-level writing courses to help students across the disciplines achieve proficiency, then it will need to allot faculty lines accordingly.

III. Oral Expression Requirement

Many faculty members at St. Mary's do not explicitly teach oral expression skills, despite the fact that we expect our students to engage actively in class discussions and to make presentations, including their St. Mary's Project presentations. Given how important it is for students to develop such skills, both for their academic life and for engaging with the world beyond, we are recommending that the College make a commitment to improving its students' skills in this area, beginning with the first-year seminars and continuing through a student's major. Each academic major will be responsible for formulating a plan to foster oral expression, with final assessment occurring during a student's senior year. The College,

meanwhile, is responsible for providing the necessary developmental support for faculty, who are not normally expert in teaching oral expression.

The goal of the oral expression skill is clear spoken communication in front of an audience. One component of effective oral expression is the presentation of a prepared set of ideas and the ability to defend them. Students should be able to articulate their ideas orally in a formal presentation setting, and demonstrate an ability to respond clearly, creatively and spontaneously in response to audience questions or comments. Students should show competency within the accepted oral presentation style of their major discipline, as well as adapt their communication abilities to different audiences. Another component of effective oral expression is the ability to participate in an ongoing discussion, and to challenge other speakers to defend their ideas. Students should be able to ask questions of other presenters (peers or experts) in a way that demonstrates understanding of the material presented and an ability to integrate new material with existing knowledge. Students should also be able to contribute meaningfully to discussions that facilitate the exchange of ideas and opinions in less structured settings.

IV. Information Literacy Requirement

(We thank librarians Celia Rabinowitz, Terry Leonard, Rob Sloan and Kerie Nickel for their “Immersion of Information Literacy” proposal #13, from which we draw many of our ideas.)

The ability to seek out, evaluate, and use information is vital to the academic enterprise, as well as to engaging with the world beyond. As the St. Mary’s librarians point out in their proposal, it also develops over time and cannot be confined to an orientation-week library session, to a stand-alone literacy course, or even to a single research methods class. Information literacy skills must be developed throughout a student’s four-year college career, with all disciplines purposefully teaching them and giving their students plentiful opportunities to apply and internalize them. Senior-level work especially should require students to use information literacy skills, and a student’s final proficiency can be assessed at that time. The Library staff will be responsible for working with faculty and academic majors on ways to teach information literacy.

The goal of information literacy is the effective and ethical use of information in research communication, written and oral. Information literacy includes identifying the need for information, accessing information effectively and efficiently, evaluating sources critically, and incorporating information into one’s own knowledge base. These skills are predicated on a basic understanding of the structure, services, and resources provided by the college library. Students should know how to use the library’s online catalog, to use literature in print and non-print formats, to distinguish among and select the appropriate research sources, to be able to locate those resources, and to use primary and secondary sources ethically (with an understanding of plagiarism and intellectual property) in their own writing.

Appendix 2 of the Core Curriculum passed in September 2006 – First-Year Seminars

The purpose of the first-year seminar is to usher students into intellectual passion and academic rigor. Faculty from most or all departments will teach focused classes on topics within their discipline that they care about and that will speak to students. Through topics that offer them real choice, students will be introduced to critical thinking, written expression, oral expression, and information literacy on a college-level. The experience of Grinnell College, which teaches such seminars (see below), is that the seminars energize faculty and excite in-coming students, who identify their top three choices.

Although the seminars will be academic courses, not “Introduction to College” courses, there are creative ways to use them to help ease a student’s transition into what is generally considered his or her most difficult semester. The seminars can also be used to help lessen the gap that currently exists between Academic Life and Campus Life, extending the life of the mind into campus culture. Possibilities for crossover include having the seminar faculty:

- create courses that will include activities related to campus and off-campus events
- contact the students in the seminar during the summer
- meet with their classes during orientation week—perhaps to discuss a book that all students have read—thereby creating a more meaningful academic experience than we currently provide
- serve as first-year advisors
- meet with their students in informal as well as classroom settings
- make use of the students’ group identity to assign group work within the residence halls
- make use of student teaching assistants assigned to the sections who can also function as mentors in the residence halls
- when possible, teach within the residence halls

The College will need to support, financially and through other means, the workshops and support groups that will enable faculty to develop approaches to teaching fundamental skills and to coordinate efforts so that consistent messages are being sent to in-coming students about the value of a liberal arts education and the College’s academic expectations. In these venues, faculty could discuss common goals and ways of addressing them, look at examples from other colleges, and work out implementation issues. They can also explore the applicability to their disciplines of the seven core questions described by the GEC proposal put forward by Michael Glaser, Beth Charlebois, Katherine Socha, and Bessie Mbadugha. These questions are (1) how and why things work (or don’t), (2) how we think, (3) values, attitudes and perceptions, (4) making decisions, (5) follow up, application, and being responsible for what we know, (6) understanding who I am, and (7) what our students bring to the table. This proposal also puts forward a plan which we may want to follow in which support groups, comprised of 8-10 faculty and an appointed facilitator, meet monthly to talk about how the courses are going and to discuss best practices. These support groups could be developed by the Teaching and Learning Committee and overseen and coordinated by the Curriculum Committee.

Staffing Impact

St. Mary’s will need to offer 30 first-year seminars for a 450-person entering class. Departments, depending on size and other factors, will probably contribute anywhere from one to four seminars each year. They will be able to do so with existing resources because our proposal reduces the number of credits students must take to fulfill their core requirements. This means that almost all departments will be teaching fewer sections of introductory courses than they do now, sometimes half as many. Additionally, our proposal’s new writing requirement will reduce by about 20 the number of English composition courses that the school offers each year, thereby opening up more faculty slots.

Grinnell College first-year tutorials taught in fall 2005

Grinnell's tutorials are topics courses offered by faculty across the disciplines. A fuller description of the courses can be found at www.grinnell.edu/offices/studentaffairs/acadadvising/tutorial

Art in Fiction (Art)
Search of Self in Fiction, Film and Song (German)
African American Autobiography (English)
Liberal Education and Critical Citizenship (Economics)
The Americas on October 11, 1492 (Biology)
Placing Ourselves: Landscape, Locale and Identity (Theatre)
Stories, Story-Tellers, and Audiences: Giovanni Boccaccio's *Decameron* and Marguerite of Navarre's *Heptameron* (English)
The Ways of Paradox (Philosophy)
Secret Codes (Mathematics/Computer Science)
The Ring of the Nibelung (Music)
Language in Nonhuman Primates (Psychology)
Japanese Mythology (Religious Studies)
Family Tragedy in Literature (French)
Community Organizing: Empowering People, Effecting Change (Sociology)
Freedom (History)
Manipulation or Subversion? Popular Culture in American Experience (Education)
Language of Color: Practice and Perception in Art and Culture (Art)
Dear John: Restoring the Lost Art of the Letter (English)
Weird Music (Music)
Humanities I: The Ancient Greek World (Classics)
Fields of Genes (Biology and Biological Chemistry)
Victoria's Secrets (History)
Onerous Ownership? Intellectual Property in the 21st Century (Math/Computer Science)
Degradation and Development in Tropical Forests (Anthropology)
Dis Lit: Illness, Disability, and Contemporary Writing (English)
Hollywood's Radical Ideas (Economics)
Zero and Infinity (Mathematics/Computer Science)
Modern Iraqi Literature (English)
Liberal Education and Critical Citizenship (Political Science)
The Illness Experience across Cultures (Anthropology)
Engineered Humans: A Study in Technology and Literature (Physics)
Restoration of the Sistine Chapel Ceiling: Chemistry and Controversy (Chemistry)
Political Lives (Political Science)
Man Talk, Woman Talk: Beyond Words (Spanish)
The Fairy Tale in 20th Century Russian Literature and Film: In Search of a Magical Kingdom (Russian)

Appendix 3 of the Core Curriculum passed in September 2006 - International Languages

(We thank the Department for International Languages and Cultures for its “Language Proficiency” proposal #14. We are proposing here most of what they propose.)

We call for all students to take one course beyond entering proficiency. In other words, students entering with no proficiency will be required to take only 101 (currently they would have to take 102 as well) while students entering with, say, 202 proficiency would take 206 (currently they are not required to take a course beyond 102). The practice of requiring students to take a course beyond entering proficiency is one that the College has followed in the past with math and writing in the old Honors program.

The ILC proposal originates from a concerted study that the department undertook of its program. It was concerned that (1) the proficiency level reached after one year is extremely basic and (2) due to the heavy credit pressures of the GEC, most students who complete the proficiency requirement do not choose to take additional courses in the language.

As a result, ILC wants to reconceptualize some of its language acquisition courses, having them be cultural introductions as well as language courses. If students cannot be expected to achieve proficiency, at least they will have the experience of studying an international language and culture. If each language course is also a culture course, then all students, including those who exempt out of the current two-semester requirement, will stand to benefit. Looking at other colleges that have taken this path, the ILC Department also argues that, with a change in requirement, students will be more likely to go on to take further courses in the foreign language, especially those enrolling in 201, 202, or 206. In our proposal, the cultural studies (or diversity and cultural competency) requirement further encourages students to take more language study. So too does the overall reduced number of credits.

Impact – ILC estimates that there would be no additional enrollment pressures on the department because, currently, roughly 30% of the entering class must take two language courses and 30% exempt out of language altogether. (The other 40% take a single course.) While not adding to enrollment, the change has the benefit of distributing students more evenly among 101, 102, 201, 202 and 206 sections, relieving overcrowding in the 100-level classes and adding students to the smaller 200-level sections. Of course, if the new requirement in fact motivates significant numbers of students to pursue further language study (a development that would benefit the school), then ILC may need a new faculty line.

Appendix B – Core Curriculum Goals and Mission Statement

Goals for the 4-year college experience: Any course we teach will be related to our overarching curricular goals drawn from our mission statement and descriptions of SMCM as a “public honors college.” Students should therefore:

- engage in and articulate the value of creative and intellectual exploration;
- describe the importance of being open to diversity in all its forms and behave in ways that demonstrate this openness;
- accept responsibility for their role within the larger society, demonstrating social responsibility and civic mindedness in their decision-making and their behavior on a daily basis;
- define the “global community” and use their liberal arts education to serve the great good of that global community;
- evidence environmental stewardship in their choices and actions on a daily basis; and
- participate actively in the campus community

Core Curriculum Mission Statement

The faculty of St. Mary’s College shares a commitment to provide our students with a broad grounding in liberal learning. The Core Curriculum represents our endeavor to give this commitment practical form. This curriculum should stimulate a spirit of inquiry about a range of intellectual issues and develop students’ ability to think creatively and critically, with reason and imagination.

Because students must develop the intellectual and ethical resources to flourish in our complex world, the Core Curriculum engages students in different modes of knowledge and learning. Through the Core Curriculum our students develop the abilities to speak and write with clarity and precision; construct sound arguments; apply theoretical concepts and integrate knowledge; and use information and technology resources effectively and ethically. Students develop these abilities across all disciplines, through creative production in the fine arts to scientific method in the sciences.

Our vision of learning at St. Mary’s College includes, welcomes, and depends upon many voices and viewpoints. The Core Curriculum begins the process through which faculty and students participate in on-going conversations about value, meaning, understanding, and action. A student’s intellectual growth will therefore entail a deepening moral awareness. The Core Curriculum lays the foundation that will enable St. Mary’s College students to develop a sense of social and civic responsibility and be prepared to participate ethically and intelligently as informed citizens of the communities in which they work and live.

Appendix C – Goals and Learning Outcomes for Individual Elements of the Core Curriculum

1. Fundamental Liberal Arts Skills: Critical Thinking, Written Expression, Oral Expression, and Information Literacy

Critical thinking, written expression, oral expression, and information literacy are the cornerstones of a traditional liberal arts education and are essential to an integrative curriculum. All students in all majors employ them throughout their academic careers. Making sure that all students achieve proficiency in these skills will lead to the “excellence” in education that our mission statement calls for.

“Skill” should not be understood, reductively, as “mere technique.” The notion of skill is rooted in a long history of humanism, namely, skill as *hexis* (Greek) or *habitus* (Latin), both suggesting capacity. The full notion of skill fits nicely with the language of excellence also; Aristotle argued that excellence (*arête*) is rooted in cultivated ability, disposition, or capacity.

The following skills represent those possessed by the liberal thinker/citizen. Although each skill maintains its identity as the definitions below signify, these skills inextricably inform one another. These skills will be introduced and practiced in the core curriculum, but as students matriculate beyond the core curriculum the outcomes for these skills will expand, multiply, and diverge. Assessment of these skills will take place in a variety of ways at milestones in the core, in the major, and in the senior capstone experiences.

Critical Thinking

the capacity to recognize and appreciate the context of a line of thought.
the capacity to evaluate the consistency and coherency of a line of thought.
the capacity to create a consistent, coherent, and compelling line of thought.

Written Expression

the capacity to clearly articulate a coherent, creative, and compelling line of thought in writing.

Oral Expression

the capacity to clearly articulate a coherent and compelling line of thought.

Information Literacy

the capacity to identify the need for information.
the capacity to locate, analyze, evaluate, and effectively use information.

Learning Outcomes for Critical Thinking, Written Expression, Oral Expression, and Information Literacy

The following outcomes are based on what we expect students to be able to do by the completion of the core curriculum. Students will continue to develop the four fundamental skills as they progress in their major. In both the core and the major, students will often use two or more of these skills simultaneously. For example, in writing a critique of a political speech, a student would have to “recognize the main ideas” of that speech (an outcome of critical thinking) as well as “adopt [the] appropriate voice [and] tone” for the critique (an outcome of written expression). Thus, some skill

outcomes may be similar or nearly the same, as is the case of the rhetorical knowledge required for skill in written and oral expression. The outcomes are arranged in order of general coherence, not in order of importance.

Critical Thinking

Students will be able to

- attend with an open mind;
- recognize main ideas in a line of thought;
- identify supporting details in a line of thought;
- recognize explicit relationships among ideas;
- analyze complex issues and make informed decisions;
- synthesize information in order to arrive at reasoned conclusions;
- evaluate the logic, validity, and relevance of data;
- solve challenging problems; and
- use knowledge and understanding in order to generate and explore new questions.

Written Expression

Rhetorical Knowledge

Students will be able to

- identify and understand components of a rhetorical situation;
- write with purpose;
- generate a specific claim relevant to the context when given a general purpose;
- respond to the needs of different audiences;
- use conventions of format and structure appropriate to the rhetorical situation;
- adopt appropriate voice, tone, and level of formality;
- describe how the conventions of genres shape and inform experiences of reading and writing; and
- write in several genres.

Critical Thinking, Reading, and Writing

Students will be able to

- use writing and reading for inquiry, learning, thinking, and communicating;
- support a claim;
- engage in and respond to a writing assignment as a series of tasks, including finding, evaluating, analyzing, and synthesizing appropriate primary and secondary sources;
- integrate their own ideas with those of others; and
- describe/analyze the relationships among language, knowledge, and power.

Processes

Students will be able to

- engage in writing as a recursive process, producing multiple drafts to create and complete a successful text;
- use an array of flexible strategies for generating, revising, editing, and proof-reading;
- participate in collaborative and social aspects of writing as an open process that permits writers to use later invention and re-thinking to revise their work;
- participate in the collaborative and social aspects of writing as responders;
- take responsibility for owning their work; and

- use a variety of technologies to address diverse aspects of the writing process.

Knowledge of Conventions

Students will be able to

- identify and use common formats for different kinds of texts;
- identify and use knowledge of genre conventions ranging from structure and paragraphing to tone and mechanics;
- document their work appropriately given the genre, audience, and purpose of writing; and
- control such surface features as syntax, grammar, punctuation, and spelling.

Oral Expression

Rhetorical Knowledge

Students will be able to

- identify and understand components of a rhetorical situation;
- speak with purpose
- generate a specific claim relevant to the context when given a general purpose;
- respond to the needs of different audiences;
- use conventions of format and structure appropriate to the rhetorical situation;
- adopt appropriate voice, tone, and level of formality;
- describe how the conventions of genres shape and inform experiences of reading and writing; and
- speak in several genres.

Processes

Students will be able to

- support a claim;
- select appropriate support based on the topic, audience, setting, and purpose;
- select organizational patterns that are appropriate to the topic, audience, context, and purpose; and
- select words that are appropriate to the topic, audience, purpose, context, and speaker.

Delivery

Students will be able to

- use appropriate vocal variety, speaking rate, pitch, and intensity to heighten and maintain interest;
- articulate clearly;
- demonstrate appropriate nonverbal behavior that supports the verbal message;
- demonstrate appropriate interpersonal skills for various contexts;
- display self-awareness as a communicator; and
- use a variety of technologies to accompany/enhance an oral presentation.

Information Literacy

Library Facility and Services

Students will be able to

- navigate the physical layout of the SMCM Library and its locally held resources (the collections);
- identify and use the human resources available in the circulation, reference, and Interlibrary Loan departments;

- use Library of Congress call numbers to locate materials in the Library; and
- use the Library web site to locate and use the catalog and research databases at a basic level, as well as obtain general information.

Information Needs and Research

Students will be able to

- identify key concepts and terms that describe their information need;
- explore general information sources to learn more about a topic;
- develop a research topic and demonstrate a capacity to construct a research strategy including use of appropriate commands, knowledge of search fields, capacity to use Boolean operators, understand truncation, and use controlled vocabulary;
- recognize various types of materials and formats available;
- delineate between free web resources and licensed resources available through the web;
- review information found and recognize whether the topic needs to be modified; and
- recognize the purpose and audience for various information sources.

Information Use and New Ideas

Students will be able to

- describe publication cycles and identify the timeliness of information;
- demonstrate the capacity to appropriately record or save desired information in an organized manner;
- synthesize information into a research paper or presentation; and
- use appropriate documentation styles and both recognize and prevent plagiarism

2. Introduction to the Liberal Arts: First-Year Seminars

By the end of the first year seminar, students will be able to

- describe and use a variety of critical thinking methods in interacting with the topic, question, or group of texts that form the core of the seminar;
- use effective listening and cooperative skills in collaborating with their learning community to develop a foundation of information and to construct knowledge;
- use effective oral expression strategies and model civility of discourse when engaging in small group activities, participating in large group discussions, and in making formal presentations;
- use information literacy skills effectively to complete course assignments and activities; they will identify the need for diverse kinds of information, will access information effectively and efficiently, evaluate sources critically, and incorporate new material into their existing knowledge base;
- write with an acceptable level of proficiency in organizing their ideas, developing a thesis, and revising and editing writing, both informal and formal, in a variety of genres for audiences of both peers and professors;

- make connections between their seminar experience and the rest of their curriculum, as well as between the seminar and other curricular content and their overall experiences as first-year college students;
- assess their strengths as students and determine possible obstacles to their on-going academic success;
- describe what it means to be an active member of the college community and to participate thoughtfully, both intellectually and from the heart, in academic discourse;
- apply, analyze, synthesize, and evaluate specific course content and disciplinary or interdisciplinary approach to learning on which the seminar is based.

3. International Languages

The required international language courses are courses that promote linguistic and cultural literacy besides the English language. After completing this element, students will be able to:

- identify key topics, questions, and issues central to the specific language and culture being studied, understand other cultures from their own internal perspectives
- apply the investigative strategies of these disciplines to collect, organize, and analyze information, to solve problems, and to reflect on issues of cultural and societal importance.
- articulate the strengths and limitations of these methodologies in dealing with problems and issues, and will be able to describe their value in dealing with cross-disciplinary topics and concerns.
- write and speak at the level of the language course taken, and use the tools of information literacy appropriate to them in ethical ways to inform their engagement with these areas of study.

4. Liberal Arts Approaches to Understanding the World

By the end of their experiences in courses that fulfill the “Approaches to Liberal Arts” category of the Core Curriculum, students will be able to:

- distinguish among the various methodological approaches used in the study of the liberal arts;
- select an area of study for further pursuit based on knowledge of the basic assumptions, methodologies, and ways of interacting with information in their chosen discipline or interdisciplinary area of study.

The individual outcomes for the different subject and approach groupings are as follows:

Mathematics—courses whose object of study is primarily mathematical and abstract systems, using quantitative methodologies (mathematics, computer science).

After completing this element, students will, at a level appropriate to an entry-level course, be able to:

- identify key topics, questions, and issues, central to the mathematician’s study and use of mathematical and abstract systems.
- apply an array of quantitative methodologies to collect, organize, and analyze information, to solve problems, and to reflect on issues of personal or societal significance.

- articulate the strengths and limitations of these methodologies and their usefulness in dealing with quantitatively-based problems and will be able to describe their value in dealing with cross-disciplinary topics and concerns.
- write and speak using the language of these disciplines, and using the tools of information literacy appropriate to them in ethical ways to inform their engagement with these areas of study.

Natural Sciences—courses whose object of study is primarily natural phenomena, using scientific methodologies (biology, chemistry, physics); will include a lab experience.

After completing this element, students will, at a level appropriate to an entry-level course, be able to:

- describe key topics, questions, and issues central to the natural scientist’s study of natural phenomena.
- apply the investigative techniques of the natural sciences to collect, organize, and analyze information, to solve problems, and reflect on issues of personal or societal importance.
- articulate the strengths and limitations of these methodologies in dealing with problems and issues, and will be able to describe their value in dealing with cross-disciplinary topics and concerns.
- write and speak using the language of these disciplines, and using the tools of information literacy appropriate to them in ethical ways to inform their engagement with these areas of study.

Social Sciences—courses whose object of study is human behavior—individual, in groups, or in cultures—using scientific methodologies (psychology, economics, political science, anthropology, sociology).

After completing this element, students will, at a level appropriate to an entry-level course, be able to:

- identify key topics, questions, and issues central to the social scientist’s study of human behavior, both individual, in groups, and in cultures.
- apply the investigative strategies of the social sciences to collect, organize, and analyze information, to solve problems, and to reflect on issues of personal and societal importance.
- articulate the strengths and limitations of these methodologies in dealing with problems and issues, and will be able to describe their value in dealing with cross-disciplinary topics and concerns.
- write and speak with confidence using the language of these disciplines, and using the tools of information literacy appropriate to them in ethical ways to inform their engagement with these areas of study.

Arts—courses whose primary object of study is aesthetic media: the forms by which these media express ideas and experiences; the history of those forms, the ideas embodied in them, and the theories used to interpret them; and the creation or performance of new examples of these media (music, art, art history, literature, theatre, film, and other media).

After completing this element, students will, at a level appropriate to an entry-level course, be able to:

- identify key topics, questions, and issues central to the artist’s exploration of aesthetic media, including the forms by which these media express ideas and experiences, the history of these

forms, the ideas embedded in them, the theories used to interpret them, and the creation or performance of new examples of these media.

- apply the investigative strategies of the artist to collect, organize, and analyze information, to solve problems, and to reflect on issues of personal and societal importance.
- articulate the strengths and limitations of these methodologies in dealing with problems and issues, and will be able to describe their value in dealing with cross-disciplinary topics and concerns.
- write and speak using the language of these disciplines, and using the tools of information literacy appropriate to them in ethical ways to inform their engagement with these areas of study.

Cultural Studies—courses whose primary object of study is cultures and languages other than the predominant native culture of students, using the methodologies of language acquisition and/or cultural studies (international languages and cultures, Asian studies, Africa and African Diaspora studies).

After completing this element, students will, at a level appropriate to an entry-level course, be able to:

- identify key topics, questions, and issues central to scholars in language and cultural studies, such as those used by experts in international languages and culture, Asian studies, and Africa and African Diaspora studies, to explore language and culture other than that of the student's native culture.
- apply the investigative strategies of these disciplines to collect, organize, and analyze information, to solve problems, and to reflect on issues of personal and societal importance.
- articulate the strengths and limitations of these methodologies in dealing with problems and issues, and will be able to describe their value in dealing with cross-disciplinary topics and concerns.
- write and speak using the language of these disciplines, and using the tools of information literacy appropriate to them in ethical ways to inform their engagement with these areas of study.

Humanistic Foundations—courses whose primary object of study is the large-scale paradigms by which humans have tried for thousands of years to make sense of their historical, moral and spiritual relation to the universe (religious studies, philosophy, history, women, gender, and sexuality studies)

After completing this element, students will, at a level appropriate to an entry-level course, be able to:

- identify key topics, questions, and issues central to philosophers, historians and experts in religious studies and women, gender, and sexuality studies as they study those large-scale paradigms by which humans have tried to make sense of their historical, moral, and spiritual relationship to the universe.
- apply the investigative strategies of these disciplines to collect, organize, and analyze information, to solve problems, and to reflect on issues of personal and societal importance.
- articulate the strengths and limitations of these methodologies in dealing with problems and issues, and will be able to describe their value in dealing with cross-disciplinary topics and concerns.
- write and speak using the language of these disciplines, and using the tools of information literacy appropriate to them in ethical ways to inform their engagement with these areas of study.

5. Experiencing the Liberal Arts in the World

The purpose of this component of the core curriculum is for students to learn more about self and the world. Students use the experience to observe and reflect on the activities going on around them, and to question what others take for granted. As they meet this requirement, students identify issues and questions, develop new awareness, and attempt to make sense of their experiences and observations. They are expected to take an active, independent, and assertive role in defining how and what they will learn. To get the most out of the experience, students must be interested, demonstrate ability, and cooperate with others at the site.

Specific purposes of the activities that the students will undertake are:

1. to learn through the dynamic interaction of *doing* and *reflecting*. As a participant/observer, students maintain a fluid balance between active participation and astute observation.

2. to engage in critical thinking about the world and their ideas in a self-reflection product (e.g., a journal) that includes:

- academic, professional, and personal goals related to the experience;
- a comparison of expected experiences to actual experiences;
- interaction with individuals at a particular site or in a particular culture;
- identification of skills needed and developed as a result of the experience;
- examples of connections made between previous courses/learning and the experience;
- reflection throughout on how the experience illuminates the academic project and vice versa; and
- reflection on how the experience relates to subsequent learning at SMCM or post-graduate plans.

The student plan to fulfill this component must encompass the following overall outcomes: The student will be able to:

- describe his or her deepening understanding of the interconnectedness of the world
- provide concrete examples of the ways in which an individual's cultural perspective affects responses to fundamental issues or characteristics of life in the twenty-first century
- use their concrete experiences and their skills of observation and reflection to test and reform their ideas
- prepare a well-developed academic project appropriate for earning upper-division level credit that relates preparatory course work (e.g., theoretical preparation) to practical application during and issues confronted at the on-site experience. In this project, students will critically think about the world and their ideas as they relate to the experience and read broadly and in-depth material that relates specifically to the experience.

Appendix D – Composition of Core Curriculum Implementation Committee

Co-Chairs

Linda Coughlin, Associate Provost for Academic Affairs, Biology

Robin Bates, English

Fundamental Liberal Arts Skills Subcommittee

Ben Click, English

Brad Park, Philosophy

Barbara Beliveau, Economics

[Also attending meetings: Celia Rabinowitz, Library]

Introduction to the Liberal Arts: First Year Seminars Subcommittee

Terry Leonard, Library

Michael Cain, Political Science

Lois Stover, Associate Provost for Academic Services, Educational Studies

Mark Heidrich, Dean of Students

[Also attending meetings: Erin McDermott '10, student]

International Languages and Liberal Arts Approaches to Understanding the World Subcommittee

Chris Tanner, Biology

David Finkelman, Psychology

Holly Blumner, Theatre, Film and Media Studies

Experiencing the Liberal Arts in the World Subcommittee

Don Stabile, Economics

Cynthia Koenig, Psychology

Appendix E – Courses that could fulfill the "Liberal Arts Approaches to Understanding the World" requirement of the new Core Curriculum

Note: This is a tentative list and courses are sure to be added. Final approval of list is the responsibility of the Core Curriculum Committee.

A student will take one course from each of the following six headings.

I. Mathematics

COSC 120 - Introduction to Computer Science
MATH 131 - Survey of Mathematics
MATH 151 - Calculus I
MATH 200 - Discrete Mathematics

II. Natural Sciences

BIOL 101 - Contemporary Bioscience with Lab
BIOL 105 - Principles of Biology
CHEM 101 - Contemporary Chemistry with Lab
CHEM 105 - General Chemistry I
GEOL 130 - Introduction to Geology
PHYS 104 - Basic Physics with Lab
PHYS 121 - College Physics I
PHYS 131 - General Physics I

III. Social Sciences

ANTH 101 - Introduction to Anthropology
ECON 101 - Introduction to Economics
POSC 100 - Introduction to Politics
PSYC 101 - Introduction to Psychology
SOC 101 - Introduction to Sociology

IV. Arts

ENGL 106 - Introduction to Literature
ENGL 230 - Literary Topics
ENGL 270 - Creative Writing
ENGL 280 - Literature in History I
ENGL 281 - Literature in History II
ENGL 282 - Literature in History III
Any course (three or four semester hours) in ART, ARTH, MUSC, or TFMS

V. Cultural Studies

Any course in ILAS, ILCC, ILCF, ILCG, ILCS, ILCT
AADS 214 - Introduction to Africa and African Diaspora Studies
ANTH 101 - Introduction to Anthropology
ARTH 100 - Introduction to Art History
ASIA 200 - Introduction to Asian Studies

MUSC 216 - Introduction to the World's Music
TFMS 200 - Theater in History
TFMS 258 - Dance in History
RELG 110 - Introduction to World Religions

Note: Students cannot use the same course to fulfill the requirement in International Languages and the requirement in Cultural Studies.

VI. Humanistic Foundations

HIST 200 - American Civilization
HIST 201 - Historical Foundations of the Modern World to 1450
HIST 206 - East Asian Civilization
HIST 219 - Colonial American Survey
HIST 253 - Latin American Civilizations (not in 2006-07 catalog)
HIST 2aa - Rise of the West: 1450-1900 (previously HIST 105)
HIST 2bb - Twentieth Century World: 1880s-1980s
HIST 2cc - Russia, the USSR, and Eastern Europe
HIST 2dd - Introduction to African and African Diaspora Studies
PHIL 100 - Introduction to Philosophy
PHIL 120 - Introduction to Ethics
RELG 110 - Introduction to World Religions
WGSX 200 - Introduction to Women Studies
WGSX 210 - Introduction to Gender Studies

Appendix F – Curriculum Committee response to February 20, 2007 version of the Core Curriculum Implementation Committee’s report regarding the recommendation of a new Core Curriculum Committee

CC response to CCIC
April 1, 2007

1. Relation of CC to CCC
(CCIC A.3, p.3)

Our recommendation is to form the CCC as a subcommittee of the CC for two reasons: First, we think it is of prime importance that CCC stays within the current faculty governance (and thus report to the faculty) rather than become an all-college committee and report to the Provost’s Office via the new Dean of FYE. Second, we think it is too early to ask for CCC to become its own new standing committee. We also recommend revisiting this issue about 3-4 years into the new Core Curriculum, once we are all clearer what kind of work and how much work the CCC is engaged in. At such a point, the CCC and CC (or senate) may decide to turn CCC into its own standing committee. We just think it is now too early for such a decision.

We conceive of the relationship between CCC and CC as the functional equivalent of a “department” with the new Dean of FYE as roughly the functional equivalent of a “department chair.” In this way, CCC can do all of its regular work (as specified under A.3) without having to get approval for it by the CC and without having to have a personnel overlap. However, CCC would occasionally report to CC about its activities.

CCC would report to and consult with CC on the following and similar issues:

- Anything that the CCC would like to get considered by the faculty senate or all faculty would first go through the CC (as outlined in the current governance structure).
- The CC would approve the catalog description for First Year Seminars, but the actual seminars offered each year do not need approval by the CC; they would be treated the same way as departments arrange their semesterly schedule of classes. But if the description for the category of the FYS is to change, it needs to go to the CC as would any catalog changes. We recommend that the language of your final document reflects this arrangement (e.g. the CC recommends approval for catalog description of FYS, but the CCC approves all individual FYS on a semesterly basis)
- All new courses for the “breadth and experiences in the world”, if and when not already in the catalog, first need to be approved by the CC as new catalog additions. Once approved, the CC sends them to the CCC, which approves as to their suitability for the Core Curriculum requirements. We recommend that the language of your final document reflect this (e.g., the CCC approves **the use of courses** for the breadth and the experiences in the world requirement)
- Assessment, planning coordination, workshops and supervisory issues all remain under the authority of the CCC. Only in cases of larger substantial changes (policy, guidelines, etc) would the CCC consult with the appropriate governance bodies.