

Core Curriculum Task Force

Update to the College of Arts and Sciences

Prepared by Christine Siegel, Task Force Chair

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Task Force Members

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Task Force Members

- Shannon Harding, Associate Professor of Psychology, College of Arts & Sciences
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Task Force Members

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- Jonathan Stott, SJ, Assistant Professor of Physics, College of Arts and Sciences
- Janet Striuli, Assistant Professor of Mathematics, College of Arts and Sciences
- John Thiel '73, Professor of Religious Studies, College of Arts and Sciences

Charge

The Core Curriculum Task Force has been charged with considering revisions to the undergraduate core curriculum, and making recommendations based on those considerations for a core curriculum that is rooted in the Jesuit and Catholic tradition of a vibrant humanistic liberal arts experience and responds to the needs of the 21st century learner. Consistent with the intellectual apostolate of our Jesuit heritage, any revised core will remain true to the conviction that through teaching and learning we are engaged in the love of truth, which depends on a deep commitment to interdisciplinary study, critical reflection, and action in service to others. In meeting the needs of the contemporary learner, any revised core will aim to prepare students with the intellectual and technological skills to become contributing members of a democratic society.

*Depth, Diversity and Learned Ministry: Challenges to Jesuit Higher Education Today**

- How does the current context challenge us to redirect the mission of Jesuit higher education?
- How do we expect to transform students?
- What dispositions are necessary for faculty to achieve this transformation?
- What new pedagogies are necessary?
- How will we measure our progress and success?

** Adolfo Nicolas, SJ, Superior General of the Society of Jesus, Mexico City, April 2010*

Evidence

- Expertise of the members of the Task Force
- Fairfield University's historical documents
- Professional literature and texts related to Jesuit education
- Core Curricula at other institutions of higher education
- Survey data from the Office of Institutional Research
- Focus Group data
- Class of 2014 transcripts
- Class of 2014 case studies
- Professional literature on needs of 21st century learners
- Anecdotal evidence from constituents across campus
- Potential approaches to core curricular revisions
- Discourse analysis of EN 11/12 student portfolios*

Survey / Focus Group Data

- 2006 Alumni Survey (1995 and 2000)
- 2010 FUSA Survey
- 2011 Sophomore Survey
- 2011 Focus Group Interviews
- 2013 Admitted Student Questionnaire
- 2009-2013 College Senior Surveys

Value Proposition of the Core

- The core curriculum should be a common educational experience that complements the major and fosters the value of both multi-disciplinary and interdisciplinary study to facilitate students' cognitive and affective development.

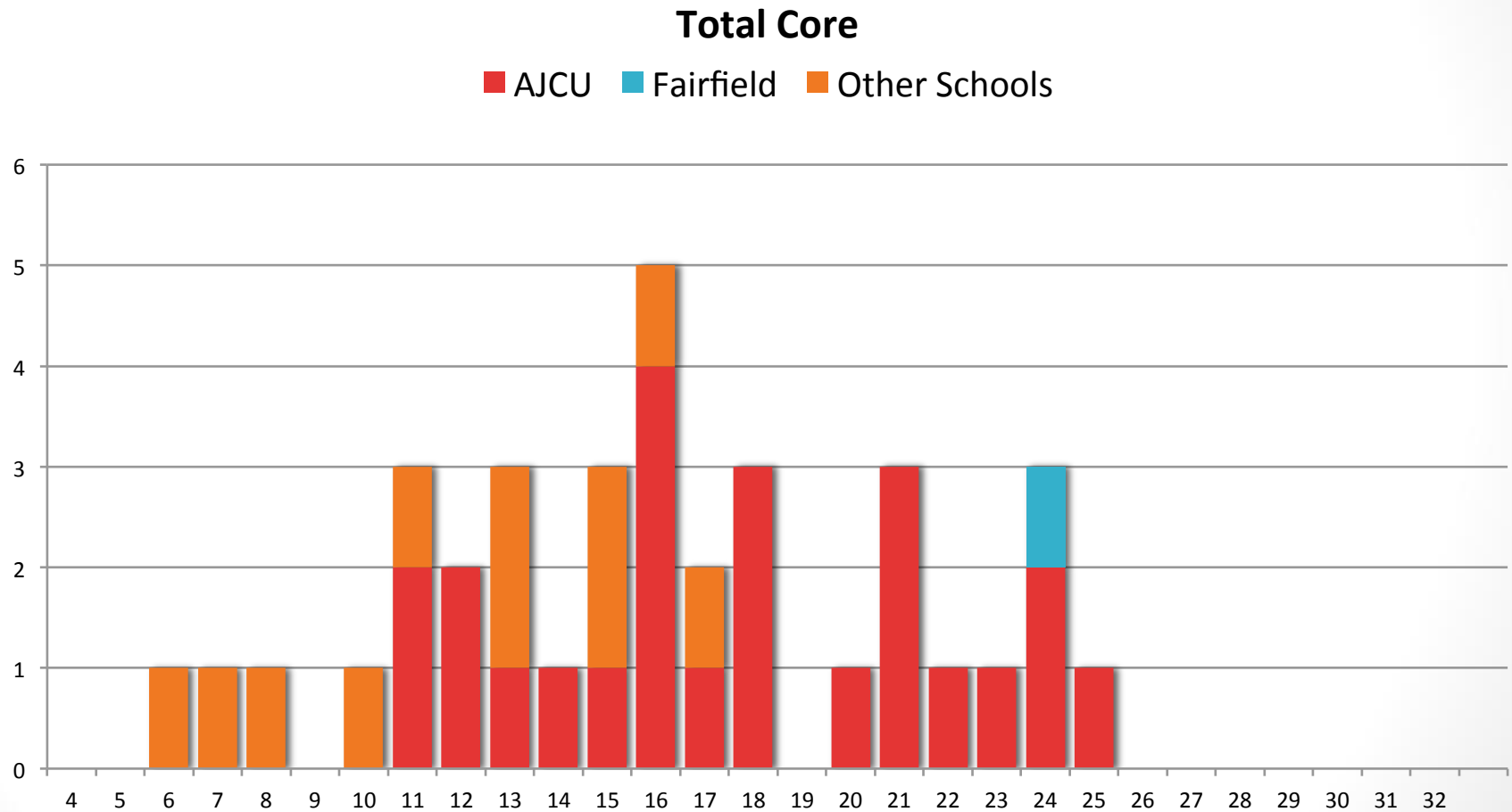
Concerns about the Current Core

- It's complicated
- Not well understood by faculty or students
- Relatively large in number of required credits/courses

Comparisons to Other AJCU Curricula

- Requires agreement about Fairfield University's core curriculum
- Depends upon publicly available information about the curricula at other institutions
- Analysis suggests that Fairfield University's current core is at the high end of the range of total number of courses and areas of study required across the AJCU
- Some aspects of core curricular requirements at other AJCU schools could not be mapped to Fairfield current core

Total Core Requirements



Core + Major = Degree

- There are variations in how core and major work together toward degree completion across departments within the College of Arts and Sciences and across schools at Fairfield University
 - Current core curriculum is 60 credits (20 courses)
 - Minimum number of credits to earn a Bachelor's degree in Connecticut = 120

What about the double majors?

- Data from class of 2014 reveal that very few students actually earn a double major
 - Total undergraduate degrees = 769
 - CAS = 428
 - DSB = 235
 - SOE = 23
 - SON = 83
 - Percent of students earning double major
 - CAS = 13% (n = 56)
 - DSB = 19% (n = 45)
 - SOE = 0
 - SON = 1.2% (n=1)

What about competencies?

- While useful in some contexts, we have not be using the word “competencies” to describe what it is that students will get out of their core curricular experience at Fairfield
- What we have been discussing
 - Transformative education
 - The value of studying multiple academic disciplines
 - The value of interdisciplinary study
 - The value of teamwork
 - The need to solve real world problems in ways that contribute to the common good
 - The dispositions of faculty who teach in the core

What about logistics?

- Staffing and teaching assignments?
- Teaching load?
- Space?
- Time?
- Faculty professional development?

Needs of 21st Century Learners

- Multiple ways of asking and answering questions
- Integrative thinking
- Teamwork
- Ability to solve real world problems (for the common good)
- Digital Literacy

Timeline and Next Steps

- October 2014
 - Task Force is developing and reviewing potential revisions
 - Taking recommendations from all members of the University community via the Fairfield 2020 website or direct e-mail
- November 2014
 - Will present revisions under discussion to the University community for comment and feedback
- December 19, 2014
 - Core Curriculum Task Force Final Report Presentation
 - 2:30 in the Oak Room

Questions / Comments