

TOWARD A RENEWED CORE

March 27, 2013



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PROLOGUE

A RENEWED CORE CURRICULUM AT BOSTON COLLEGE

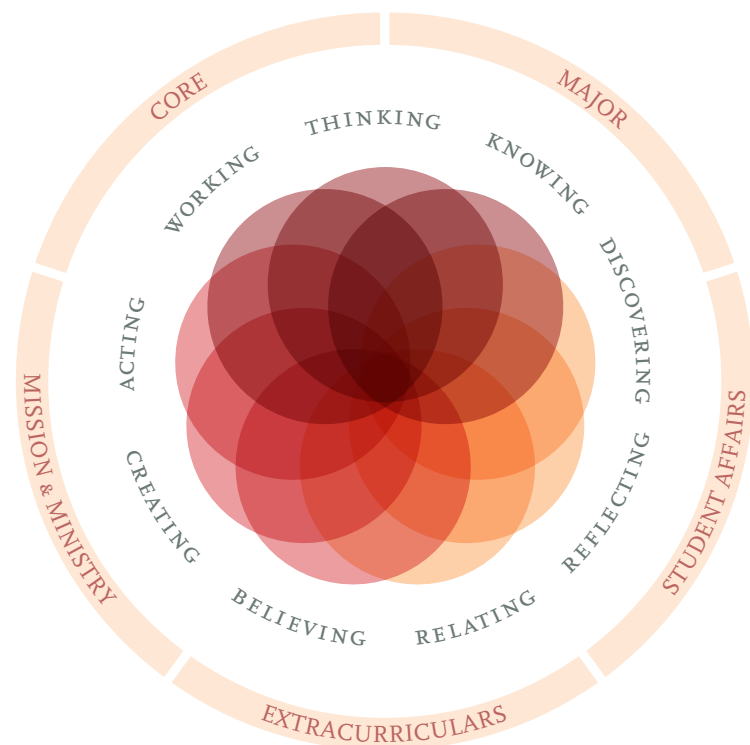
As Boston College celebrates its 150th anniversary as a Jesuit, Catholic university in one of the world's leading centers of academic excellence, we reaffirm our commitment to a core curriculum that reflects our distinctive traditions and our aspiration to provide leadership in liberal arts education. As a faculty and as a university, we believe that this renewed Core curriculum will effectively equip all students with a rigorous and extensive education in the liberal arts. Each generation of Boston College students benefits from the richness of our liberal arts curriculum which explores the intellectual and cultural traditions out of which the university emerged while placing those traditions in conversation with the challenges and opportunities of contemporary life.

Boston College's core curriculum draws strength from nearly five hundred years of Jesuit educational history. The Ignatian project of "finding God in all things" serves as a foundation for a Core that requires all undergraduates to take courses across a range of disciplines and to engage with the various ways of knowing that constitute the university. As the university engages the breadth and diversity of human knowledge, we also call on students to develop as men and women for others and connect their own studies to a commitment to justice and to the common good. Jesuit higher education remains committed to teaching and learning that advance the dialogue between religious belief and contemporary culture. An animating conviction that faith and reason are mutually illuminating lies at the heart of Boston College's core curriculum.

The education of the whole person is central to our vision for a renewed Core. By emphasizing the importance of intellectual engagement and the foundational nature of a core curriculum, the renewed Core will enhance the academic experiences of our students and will cultivate essential habits of the mind and of the heart. Beginning with first-year students and continuing through the senior year, faculty and colleagues from across the university will support students as they make meaning of their time at Boston College and chart a purposeful journey. The power of renewal will result in greater integration across academic fields, and also with partners in Student Affairs as well as Mission and Ministry. A renewed Core will allow us to realize our hopes for our students and for the next chapter of the university's remarkable history.

A SHARED OUTCOME

EDUCATING THE WHOLE PERSON



Boston College seeks to prepare students to chart a life of meaning and impact by integrating the intellectual, the social, and the spiritual. Through this integration, each student will develop as a whole person, prepared for citizenship, service, and leadership in a global society.¹ Academics, Mission & Ministry, Student Affairs, and extracurriculars each contribute to this goal. Our research shows that university leadership, faculty, students, and alumni share this goal, which is rooted in the Jesuit, Catholic tradition. Further, we find they share a common articulation of what we are calling the nine aspects that characterize the educated whole person.² These nine aspects, illustrated to the left and later in the appendix, offer a more detailed definition of integrated development and a useful way to define our shared outcome.

¹ From "The Mission of Boston College," May 31, 1996.

² Details can be found in the "Learning Review" document, January 22, 2013.

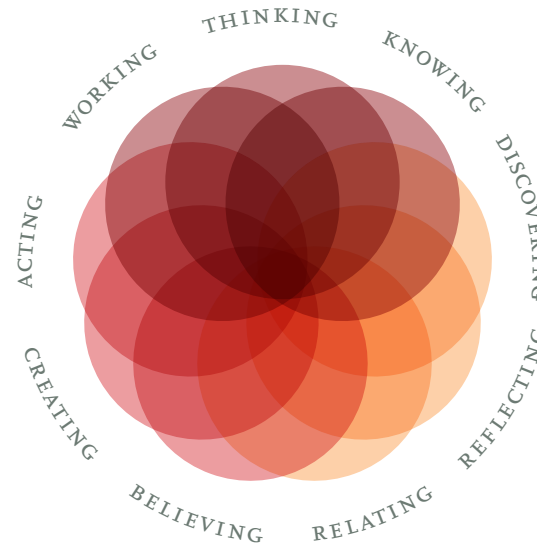
AT A GLANCE

VISION FOR THE RENEWED CORE

At the heart of the Boston College experience, the Core will unify and inspire the BC community in a shared intellectual endeavor. It will play a central role in each student’s education as a whole person, preparing them for citizenship, service, and leadership in a global society. The Core will inspire intellectual engagement, establish an enduring foundation, and chart a purposeful journey. *Note: Additional detail on the Vision can be found in the appendix on p. 28.*

THE CORE

WHOLE PERSON





RECOMMENDATION FOR A RENEWED CORE

AT A GLANCE

THE RENEWED CORE

The renewed Core consists of 3 components: Communities of Inquiry, Exploration, and Reflection. These fulfill a total of 42 credits, spanning the following disciplines:

ARTS
(3 credits)

**GLOBAL DIFFERENCES/
SOCIAL JUSTICE**

HISTORY
(6 credits)

LITERATURE
(3 credits)

MATHEMATICS
(3 credits)

NATURAL SCIENCES
(6 credits)

PHILOSOPHY
(6 credits)

SOCIAL SCIENCE
(6 credits)

THEOLOGY
(6 credits)

WRITING
(3 credits)

**Note on Global Differences/Social Justice: This requirement may be fulfilled through a course that also fulfills a Community of Inquiry or Exploration requirement. Beginning with the class of 2020, all students will fulfill the Global Differences/Social Justice requirement, at a minimum, through their Communities of Inquiry-Complex Problem course.*

Communities of Inquiry (12 credits during the first year)

Communities of Inquiry are courses taken in the first year, where students come together to engage in intensive multidisciplinary study of fundamental questions and global challenges. All students join two Communities of Inquiry, participating in an Enduring Question community in one semester and a Complex Problem community in the other. Through lectures, seminars, experiential learning opportunities, and a culminating week of ideas, students are immersed in a shared intellectual undertaking.

Enduring Questions:

In each Enduring Question community, a cohort of students explores a perennial question, such as “What is justice?” or “How do we understand the past?” Students study the question through a pair of linked courses taught by faculty from two disciplines, as well as community-wide lectures and learning experiences.

Complex Problems:

In each Complex Problem community, a cohort of students studies a contemporary global challenge, such as Climate Change, or Global Poverty. Students learn about the problem through weekly team-taught lectures and experiential, problem-based labs.

Exploration (30 credits over the course of four years)

During their four years at Boston College, students take 10 Exploration courses across the humanities, natural sciences, and social sciences. Exploration courses satisfy a renewed set of characteristics, which ensure students gain a rigorous education in the liberal arts while enabling intellectual engagement and exploration. These courses, characterized as Foundations or Immersions, range in level of breadth or depth, class size, and pedagogical approach.

Reflection

Opportunities for reflection are integrated throughout the Core. Drawing on existing Boston College programs, the Core invites students to develop skills for effective and purposeful discernment. Over the next few years, new opportunities for reflection will be developed and piloted, working closely to link Core courses with programs offered by Mission & Ministry and Student Affairs.

THE RENEWED CORE

COURSE CHARACTERISTICS

A common set of course characteristics, shown below, defines all courses in the renewed Core. Communities of Inquiry courses fulfill all characteristics, while Exploration courses incorporate a subset. This allows faculty greater freedom to tailor Exploration courses as appropriate for the subject, while ensuring that students are exposed to each desired characteristic over the course of their four years. With this system, over time, courses that were previously electives can become part of the Core.

ALL CORE COURSES:		
Ensure academic rigor		
Develop critical, analytical, and/or creative thinking skills		
Teach the ways of thinking in the discipline		
Develop communication skills for the 21st century, building towards written, oral, and/or visual eloquence. (Enduring Questions focus on written)		
Address a topic that reflects the interest and expertise of the instructor		
ENDURING QUESTION COURSES:	COMPLEX PROBLEM COURSES:	EXPLORATION COURSES FOUNDATION & IMMERSION INCLUDE A MINIMUM OF 2 OF THE FOLLOWING:
Explore what influential thinkers, writers, and artists have said about the question, drawing on tradition	Provide historical and contemporary context for the problem; explore points of disagreement and reasons the problem resists easy solutions	Draw from traditional sources and approaches, and address contemporary questions or issues
Global Differences or Social Justice, where pertinent: Foster an ethical awareness of global connections and inequities; consider impact on society and on different groups of people	Global Differences and Social Justice: Foster an ethical awareness of global connections and inequities, considering the causes and impact of the problem and potential solutions on different groups of people	Global Differences or Social Justice: Foster an ethical awareness of global connections and inequities; consider impact on society and on different groups of people
Consider the perennial questions of human life, helping students reflect on their own beliefs and core set of values	Enable students to reflect upon and understand their own role in the problem, including potential impact on a solution	Help students understand their own place in relation to cultural, economic, historical, political, religious, scientific, and/or social currents; consider the perennial questions of human life, ensuring students reflect on their own core set of values
Incorporate active, participatory learning experiences	Incorporate active, participatory learning experiences, including labs and team projects	Incorporate active, participatory learning experiences
Bring multiple disciplines into conversation		Incorporate the perspective or method of another discipline

AT A GLANCE

HYPOTHETICAL STUDENT SCHEDULE

	FRESHMAN FALL	FRESHMAN SPRING	SOPHOMORE FALL	SOPHOMORE SPRING	JUNIOR FALL	JUNIOR SPRING	SENIOR FALL	SENIOR SPRING
I	ENDURING QUESTION <i>6 credits</i>	COMPLEX PROBLEM <i>6 credits</i>	MAJOR REQUIREMENT	MAJOR REQUIREMENT	MAJOR REQUIREMENT	MAJOR REQUIREMENT	MAJOR REQUIREMENT	MAJOR REQUIREMENT
2			MAJOR REQUIREMENT	MAJOR REQUIREMENT	MAJOR REQUIREMENT	MAJOR REQUIREMENT	ELECTIVE	ELECTIVE
3	MAJOR REQUIREMENT	MAJOR REQUIREMENT	ELECTIVE	ELECTIVE	ELECTIVE	ELECTIVE	ELECTIVE	ELECTIVE
4	ELECTIVE	ELECTIVE	EXPLORATION <i>3 credits</i>	EXPLORATION <i>3 credits</i>	ELECTIVE	ELECTIVE	ELECTIVE	ELECTIVE
5	EXPLORATION FWS <i>3 credits</i>	EXPLORATION <i>3 credits</i>	EXPLORATION <i>3 credits</i>	EXPLORATION <i>3 credits</i>	EXPLORATION <i>3 credits</i>	EXPLORATION <i>3 credits</i>	EXPLORATION <i>3 credits</i>	EXPLORATION <i>3 credits</i>

**Students may study abroad in their Junior year.*

THE RENEWED CORE
A detailed view

THE RENEWED CORE

COMMUNITIES OF INQUIRY

WHAT ARE COMMUNITIES OF INQUIRY?

Communities of Inquiry are semester-long, multidisciplinary courses taken in the first year that focus on either an Enduring Question or a Complex Problem. In Enduring Questions, students critically examine and reflect upon a fundamental concern of human life. In Complex Problems, students examine an issue that has both contemporary urgency and global significance. These courses expose students to the value of disciplinary perspectives, foster intellectual community, and lay the groundwork for rigorous academic inquiry throughout their time at BC.

HOW DO COMMUNITIES OF INQUIRY WORK?

All Boston College freshman participate in Communities of Inquiry through an Enduring Question in one semester and a Complex Problem in the other. Each is taught by faculty from different departments and brings together a community of students. Communities of Inquiry courses culminate in a week of student-driven presentation and projects that engage the Boston College community.

Faculty from across the university come together based on shared interests and research foci to develop and teach Communities of Inquiry. New courses continually enter the curriculum as global issues and faculty interests evolve.

WHY COMMUNITIES OF INQUIRY?

Emphasizing an intensive, shared learning experience in students' first year, Communities of Inquiry provide students with a foundation of knowledge and skills with which to examine and influence their surrounding world. Through multidisciplinary study of perennial questions and contemporary global challenges, Communities of Inquiry expose students to the dynamic interconnections between the past and present world, and prepare them to face the complexity of the future. This component of the Core fosters a culture of intellectual engagement by bringing faculty and students together in rigorous investigation of areas of historical and global significance.

THE RENEWED CORE

ENDURING QUESTIONS

WHAT ARE ENDURING QUESTION COURSES?

In Enduring Questions, students critically examine and reflect upon a fundamental concern of human life through two linked courses. These courses provide students with a foundation in the influential thinkers, writers, and artists who have wrestled with the Question across discipline, space, and time. As each student grapples with the approaches they encounter, they reflect upon their own perspective, strive to articulate their own opinions and beliefs, and continue to define a core set of values.

HOW DOES AN ENDURING QUESTION COURSE WORK?

Each Enduring Question community focuses on one perennial question. Within each community, a cohort of ~225 freshman is subdivided into seven sections of ~32 students. These are comprised of two linked courses taught by faculty from different departments. In addition, all seven sections come together throughout the semester to engage in a larger conversation, and the semester culminates in a week of student presentations. Students receive 6 credits for participation in an Enduring Question Community. Faculty receive 3 credits per student. For all Enduring Questions courses, Writing Fellows will be available to assist faculty as desired.

NOTE: Perspectives will be offered as an Enduring Question.

LINKED COURSES

Faculty from two disciplines co-develop and teach two linked courses. Each instructor teaches his or her own course individually, with the two courses connected through content, theme, and syllabi.

Each pair of linked courses has a cohort of ~32 students, one of which may be subdivided into two groups of 16 if they are Freshman Writing Seminars.

SHARED LEARNING EXPERIENCES

Over the course of the semester, all 225 students participate in regular lectures, presentations, screenings, excursions, and/or opportunities for reflection related to their Enduring Question.

One faculty member will serve as chair of the Question to oversee the shared learning experiences.

COMMUNITY ACADEMY: A FESTIVAL OF IDEAS

The 1599 Jesuit *Ratio Studiorum* requires that students be grouped into "Academies," to give public presentations of what they have learned, including disputations, lectures, recitations of poetry, and other exercises. Working individually or in small teams, BC students will prepare projects related to their Enduring Question which will be presented to the BC community during the final week of the semester. Academy projects may include research presentations, debates, performances, exhibits, films, or other creative projects.

WHY ENDURING QUESTIONS?

Critical to the Jesuit, Catholic educational tradition is the examination of perennial questions with which humanity has grappled over centuries. Tackling these Questions demands rigorous engagement with influential writers and thinkers, deep reflection, and deliberation. By studying these questions with faculty from two different disciplines, students will be challenged to consider multiple approaches to answering the question – sometimes accordant, often contradictory. Through class discussions and lectures, extensive writing assignments, Community-wide learning experiences, and the development of a final presentation, students will gain an understanding of how others have responded to the question, and undertake the project of formulating, challenging, and articulating their own point of view.

THE RENEWED CORE

COMPLEX PROBLEMS

WHAT ARE COMPLEX PROBLEM COURSES?

In a Complex Problem Community, students examine an issue of contemporary urgency and global significance. Through a team-taught lecture, students gain an understanding of the Problem from multiple viewpoints, considering historical context, various interpretations, and attempted solutions. A complementary lab engages students to learn by doing, working in small teams to apply knowledge to real-world issues. By studying cultural, economic, historical, political, religious, scientific, and/or social currents in relation to their own experience, students foster habits of mind that are alert to global connections, differences, and inequities. All students fulfill the Global Differences/Social Justice requirement, at a minimum, through their Complex Problem course.

HOW DOES A COMPLEX PROBLEM COURSE WORK?

Each Complex Problem Community focuses on one global challenge. This community is made up of ~225 freshmen, who come together for weekly lectures, and are subdivided into 12 lab sections of ~19 students each. The semester culminates in a week of student presentations. Students receive 6 credits for participation in a Complex Problem. Each Complex Problem counts as a double course for each faculty member, with six credits per student credited to each instructor.

TEAM-TAUGHT LECTURES

Lectures are developed and team-taught by two faculty from different disciplines. Three times per week, the entire cohort of 225 students comes together for these lectures.

COMPLEX PROBLEM LABS

Once per week, the cohort breaks into smaller groups of ~19 students for a 90-minute lab.

During this time, students engage in problem-based, experiential learning related to the Complex Problem. Sequenced closely with lecture material, the Lab is led by a part-time faculty member, post-doc, or graduate student, and is co-led by two upperclass TA's. Each Complex Problem will have one head instructor to oversee all lab sections.

SHARED LEARNING EXPERIENCES

Over the course of the semester, all 225 students participate in periodic lectures, presentations, screenings, excursions, and/or opportunities for reflection related to their Complex Problem.

COMMUNITY ACADEMY: A FESTIVAL OF IDEAS

The 1599 Jesuit *Ratio Studiorum* requires that students be grouped into "Academies," to give public presentations of what they have learned, including disputations, lectures, recitations of poetry, and other exercises. In the final week of the semester, BC students will present projects related to their Complex Problem open to the BC community. Working in small teams, they select and work on these presentations during the final month of the Complex Problem Lab. Academy projects may include research presentations, debates, performances, exhibits, films, or other creative projects.

WHY COMPLEX PROBLEMS?

Students today face an increasingly complex world, where the greatest challenges have no easy solutions yet, if left unaddressed, may lead to escalating negative consequences. To influence positive change as men and women for others, students must gain an informed, nuanced understanding of Complex Problems and their attempted solutions. Studying the Problem through an active conversation among disciplines, students will gain insight into how different disciplines research, interpret, and devise solutions to the problem. Complementing lectures with intensive experiential learning will challenge students to integrate scholarship and real-world problem-solving, preparing them for more effective citizenship, service, and leadership.

THE RENEWED CORE

EXPLORATION

WHAT ARE EXPLORATION COURSES?

Throughout their four years at Boston College, students gain a foundation in the full range of liberal arts disciplines by taking 10 Exploration courses across the humanities, natural sciences, and social sciences. Exploration courses provide students with the opportunity to encounter new ways of thinking, and to explore existing and emergent interests.

HOW DO EXPLORATION COURSES WORK?

All Exploration courses share a common set of five characteristics, and incorporate at least two additional characteristics selected by the instructor. Each department will offer a portfolio of Exploration courses, including Foundation courses in the discipline, such as surveys or introductions to the methodology, as well as topic-based Immersion courses. Departmental offerings will also range in class size, pedagogical approach, and course level. Faculty will continuously develop new Exploration courses to introduce into the Core, per faculty interest, departmental discretion, and recommendations from the Core Renewal Committee.

Students take 10 Exploration courses to fulfill the remaining disciplinary requirements not completed through their Communities of Inquiry courses. Within each discipline, students select courses from a catalogue of approved offerings, based on their own intellectual interests and input from faculty mentors and advisors. Students may take Exploration courses at any point during their time at Boston College. Most students will fulfill the Writing requirement through a Freshman Writing Seminar; CSON and pre-med students may take the Writing Seminar sophomore year as needed.

WHY EXPLORATION?

Establishing an enduring foundation through extensive grounding in the liberal arts is a hallmark of the Jesuit, Catholic educational tradition. The commitment to breadth across disciplines carries forth into the renewed Core through Exploration, with a renewed set of characteristics that reimagine what constitutes an Exploration course. These renewed characteristics demand an elevated level of academic rigor, while providing more flexibility in how departments teach the methodologies of their discipline.

Every Exploration course offered within a department's portfolio will enable students to gain a foundation in the discipline: Foundation courses introduce students to basic content and methods, while Immersion courses orient students within disciplinary content and methods through focused study of specific topics. Criteria for defining courses as either Foundation or Immersion will be determined by the standards of each discipline. The inclusion of multiple pedagogical approaches within Exploration will inspire intellectual engagement, while enriching students' exposure to the broad range of liberal arts disciplines that form the Boston College core curriculum.

THE RENEWED CORE

REFLECTION

Reflection is an integral component of the renewed Core. The Core will invite students to develop skills for effective and purposeful reflection, and to employ those skills in exploring their relation to God and faith, developing as “men and women for others” through service, integrating the varied intellectual experiences of their Core courses and major, and furthering their vocational goals. Through Reflection, the Core aims to build habits of discernment that enable each student to chart a purposeful journey during their time at Boston College and throughout their lives. The renewed Core will provide enhanced opportunities for reflection in three primary ways:

- Boston College already provides many opportunities for students to learn about and practice reflection, especially through programs offered by Mission and Ministry as well as Student Affairs. The CRC will work with these offices to develop ways to make sure all students are aware of these opportunities and encouraged to participate in them. Faculty participating in each Community of Inquiry will be partnered with colleagues from Mission & Ministry and Student Affairs who will help introduce all students to the concept, usefulness, and purpose of reflection.
- Academic advising enables opportunities for sustained reflection. The Core Renewal Committee will work to strengthen advising, especially during the first year. The Director of the Academic Advising Center will be a member of the Core Renewal Committee. Advisors will receive training in reflection and could, for example, introduce its importance in meetings with students, and could reinforce the message about the availability of opportunities on campus.
- Beginning with the Communities of Inquiry courses, new opportunities for reflection will be made available to students as part of the active, participatory learning experiences in the course. Working with Mission and Ministry, Student Affairs, the AHANA office, the Career Center and other groups, the Communities will develop programs related to the Problems and Question being discussed. For example, some students might attend a retreat in Dover to reflect on the personal implications of their Problem or Question, or on the career possibilities afforded by it. Presentations by alumni, faculty, and administrators to the Communities can encourage a reflective approach to life.

We are committed to continually developing and piloting new programs and experiences that encourage both faculty and students to reflect on the purposes of a liberal arts education at a Jesuit, Catholic university. This includes creating innovative opportunities for Reflection in the Exploration courses, such as involving service experiences, presentations from the professional schools, or collaborations with the career center. We are working with Mission and Ministry and student Affairs to develop these possibilities.

GOVERNANCE AND ONGOING INNOVATION
A detailed view

THE RENEWED CORE

GOVERNANCE AND ONGOING INNOVATION

One of the objectives of the Core Renewal Project is to support ongoing innovation in the Core curriculum.

What will ongoing innovation in the Core look like at Boston College? We believe it is essential to encourage and reward faculty for engaging in the Core and collaborating across disciplines. Open, constructive dialogue and transparency must characterize the course approval process and faculty will be supported to explore and experiment with new approaches, pedagogies and technologies. Ongoing innovation requires a culture that celebrates and creates awareness of best practices in liberal arts learning, and inspires imagination, creativity, and excellence in Core teaching.

To achieve this goal, we recommend the creation of a new governing body, the Core Renewal Committee, which will spearhead ongoing innovation and oversight of the renewed Core. Replacing the existing UCDC, the CRC will take on primary responsibility for the Core, accountable for upholding quality, managing operations, and fostering a culture of innovation. Housed within the ILA, the CRC will receive funding from the University.

Among the responsibilities of the CRC will be managing the portfolio of Communities of Inquiry and Exploration courses. This will involve ensuring new courses satisfy Core characteristics, assessing the sustained relevance of Enduring Questions and Complex Problems, and maintaining an appropriate balance of optional characteristics such as writing and social justice across Exploration courses. The CRC will actively facilitate connections among faculty from different disciplines or schools and provide development and training opportunities, as well as administrative support, for faculty who teach in the Core.

The CRC will consult twice a year with the Core Steering Committee and also with the Student Advisory Council. Shaped by this input, the CRC will work closely with faculty and department heads to develop new courses that align with faculty expertise, departmental goals, and student interest. Through this ongoing process, the CRC will maintain a dynamic portfolio of Core courses that are both relevant to BC faculty and students and aligned with university goals.

The Core Steering Committee will be responsible for providing oversight, guidance and funding advocacy. They will also be responsible for overseeing an external Program Review every 8-10 years to assess the Core and recommend improvements.

THE RENEWED CORE

GOVERNANCE AND ONGOING INNOVATION

CORE STEERING COMMITTEE

- Dean of College of Arts & Sciences (*Chair*)
- Dean of Carroll School of Management
- Dean of Connell School of Nursing
- Dean of Lynch School of Education
- Director of the Institute for the Liberal Arts
- Vice President of Student Affairs
- Vice President of Mission & Ministry
- Vice Provost for Undergraduate Academic Affairs

RATIONALE:

- The Core Steering Committee will be responsible for providing oversight, guidance and funding advocacy.
- The Committee consists of those who have both the highest vested interest in the Core and the most responsibility to ensure its success educating the whole person.

STUDENT CORE ADVISORY COUNCIL

- 6 undergraduates appointed by their respective Deans:
 - 3 A&S students
 - 1 CSOM student
 - 1 CSON student
 - 1 LSOE student
- 2 students, representing UGBC (*preferably leaders of the Academic Affairs division*)
- 1 student, representing Quality of Student Life Committee

RATIONALE:

- Student input is valuable to the development of Core courses and will enable successful, future renewal.

CORE RENEWAL COMMITTEE

- Director of the Institute for the Liberal Arts (*Chair*)
- Associate Dean for the Core
- 3 appointed members of the ILA board
- Director of Academic Advising
- 4 elected members
 - 3 A&S faculty members (*1 Humanities, 1 Natural Sciences, 1 Social Sciences*)
 - 1 professional school faculty member

RATIONALE:

- The ILA was established to foster innovative programs in the liberal arts that will enhance the intellectual lives of students and faculty and supports the university's strategic commitment to leadership the liberal arts.
- Having 4 elected members who proportionally represent the four undergraduate schools allows for diverse perspectives and broad-based input into administrative affairs.
- Academic advising is critical to the Core's goals of charting a purposeful journey and establishing an enduring foundation.
- The creation of a new role, an Associate Dean for the Core, provides institutional support for the Core's operational management.

THE RENEWED CORE

GOVERNANCE AND ONGOING INNOVATION

The CRC's specific responsibilities are outlined below:

ADVOCACY & PROMOTION

- Champion and communicate the value of the Core to incoming freshmen, students, faculty and alumni
- Recognize faculty for outstanding contribution to the Core (e.g. rotating endowed Core chairs)
- Ensure that the Core is involved in annual university budget processes

MANAGEMENT & OPERATIONS

- Manage day-to-day operations of the Core
- Liaise with schools and departments

COURSE DEVELOPMENT & PORTFOLIO MANAGEMENT

- Establish a process and tools for developing and approving Core Courses
- Oversee and enable new course development including funding and faculty development
- Maintain a balanced offering of courses that reflect the commitments of the renewed Core
- Work with departments and professional schools to manage supply and demand
- Hold final authority to review courses for inclusion in the renewed Core

ONGOING ASSESSMENT & INNOVATION

- Establish (and evolve) characteristics of Communities of Inquiry courses and Exploration courses
- Facilitate interdisciplinary engagement and awareness
- Establish ongoing course feedback and assessment process
- Establish and maintain a process for individual Core course renewal
- Provide faculty with tools, support and training to encourage experimentation with new technologies and methods (e.g. experiential learning)
- Provide a forum for inspiring continuous improvement through broad-based sharing of best practices and new ideas
- Monitor the review of grading practices

Members of the CRC will have specific areas of responsibility. These include:

- Focused attention on the Communities of Inquiry courses
- Focused attention on Exploration courses
- Focused attention on pedagogy (e.g. experiential learning)

MOVING FORWARD

THE RENEWED CORE

RESOURCES

The following additional resources will enable the successful implementation of the proposed renewed Core:

HUMAN RESOURCES

- » Associate Dean
- » Post-doctoral fellows
- » Appropriate administrative support

INNOVATION FUNDS (FOCUSED ON DEVELOPING FACULTY, CONTENT & PEDAGOGY)

- » Summer Renewal Workshops
- » Core Renewal Grants
- » Support for co-curricular initiatives (e.g., labs, shared experiences, retreats)

TRAINING & DEVELOPMENT (FOCUSED ON THOSE WHO SUPPORT FACULTY)

- » Graduate students and post-docs
- » Expansion of Writing Fellows Program
- » Undergraduate peer mentors

THE RENEWED CORE

IMPLEMENTATION ROAD MAP

AY14 INITIAL PILOT

- CRC begins on September 1, 2013
- First Enduring Question and Complex Problem pilot courses offered
- Call for Exploration submissions
- New course approval using both rubrics (1991 and renewed Core)
- Beginning June 1, 2014 all new course approvals must use renewed Core course characteristics
- Intensive collaboration with Student Affairs and Mission & Ministry to develop pilots
- Existing Core courses retain certification

AY15 & AY16

- Continued development of Enduring Questions, Complex Problems, and Exploration courses
- New Enduring Question, Complex Problem, and Exploration courses offered
- Continued development of new reflection opportunities
- New reflection opportunities offered
- All new course approvals must use renewed Core course characteristics
- Existing Core courses retain certification

AY17 FULL IMPLEMENTATION

- 10 Enduring Question and 10 Complex Problem courses offered; all first year students required to complete 1 Enduring Question and 1 Complex Problem
- Expanded roll-out of new Exploration courses
- New opportunities for reflection available
- Continued development of new opportunities for reflection
- As of June 1, 2017, all Core courses must follow renewed Core course characteristics

CORE 2020

- First class graduates having completed the fully implemented renewed Core
- Expanded Freshman Seminar Opportunities
- Sophomore-specific Core experience
- Required Senior Capstone experience
- Reflection opportunities across all four years
- Renewed Core assessment

CONCLUSION

We believe that this proposed renewal of the Core represents a significant advance in undergraduate liberal arts education, at once rooted in the university's Jesuit, Catholic tradition and enlivened by a critical engagement with our contemporary world. As a community, we have the opportunity to commit to building a set of courses and programs that can transform the experiences of future Boston College students. We have developed this proposal over the last six months through an intensive process of listening to faculty colleagues, current students, recent graduates and other alumni, and administrators from across the university. On the wiki, in town hall and departmental meetings, at co-creation work sessions, and in individual conversations, we have heard from hundreds of stakeholders. Our team has been thankful for and heartened by the intensity of the Boston College community's engagement with the project of Core Renewal. We have learned a great deal in the process and intend to make sure that campus-wide discussion of the Core continues into the future.

This proposal for a renewed Core will require that all of us take on the responsibility of designing new courses, forging new collaborations, and reimaging undergraduate education at Boston College. We invite you to join us as we begin the hard work of Core renewal, moving beyond envisioning to dive deep into the work of implementation. This work will require university resources, not least the passion and expertise of our faculty. We look forward to discussing this proposal across campus in the coming weeks, and to working as a community over the next few years to deliver a truly transformative Core.

The Boston College Core Team

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APPENDIX

COMMUNITIES OF INQUIRY

CRITERIA FOR ENDURING QUESTION COURSE TOPICS

- Explores an explicitly stated question that lends itself to sustained and open inquiry, and has more than one plausible or compelling answer.
- Enduring questions are questions to which no discipline, field, or profession can lay an exclusive claim.
- These questions have been explored through the ages, and are still relevant to contemporary life.

POTENTIAL EXAMPLES:

- » How do I live a “good life”? (Perspectives)
- » What is justice?
- » How do we understand the past?
- » What does it mean to believe?
- » Who am I? (different ways to define “the self”)

COMMUNITIES OF INQUIRY

CRITERIA FOR COMPLEX PROBLEM COURSE TOPICS

- Explores an explicitly stated problem that is current and globally relevant; a contemporary issue that has no easy answer or solution.
- Robustly debatable by multiple disciplines, and owned by none; competing paradigms exist and give rise to dynamic tensions.
- Involves issues of global difference and social justice.
- Generates intellectual excitement and emotional investment.

POTENTIAL EXAMPLES:

- » Global poverty
- » Climate change
- » Health disparities
- » Water scarcity
- » Managing risk

THE RENEWED CORE

THOUGHTS ON CORE CHARACTERISTICS

ENSURE ACADEMIC RIGOR

All Core courses will be academically rigorous. They will ask students to engage with complex concepts and challenging texts. Each Core course will require students to take on a significant workload (~6 hours per week of work outside of class on average over the semester). Core courses should require regular assignments and/or problems sets and should include mid-semester and final graded work. Core courses should aim for a median grade no higher than B+.

DEVELOP COMMUNICATION SKILLS FOR THE 21ST CENTURY, BUILDING TOWARDS WRITTEN, ORAL, AND/OR VISUAL ELOQUENCE.

Communication, especially through writing, is by nature an active effort to organize and express ideas. Effective writing requires critical thinking skills as well as knowledge about the writing process, awareness of rhetorical situations and audience, and knowledge of the conventions of grammar, rhetoric, syntax, documentation, and genre. Courses will inevitably differ in the ways they incorporate different forms of communication. While many Core courses should contain a strong writing component, faculty may choose to incorporate other communication skills, considering written and oral eloquence and visual presentation across a variety of print and digital media.

Courses should incorporate multiple opportunities for students to practice and get feedback in the chosen form(s) of communication. There are many possibilities for incorporating writing: Written exams, term papers and shorter papers (especially if students are expected to revise them), journals, overnight position papers based on class discussion or reading assignments, in-class reflections designed to feed into discussion, free- writing exercises in class, even question-box submissions. Examples for other forms of communication include presentations, posters, talks, debates, wiki articles, and videos.

Enduring Question courses should incorporate multiple opportunities for students to practice and get feedback in the chosen form(s) of communication. To build writing skills, students will be required to write at least 2 papers in each of the linked Question courses, comprising ~25 pages total over the course of the semester. Students should receive ample feedback on their writing and have opportunity to revise. Writing fellows will be available to assist if faculty choose to work with them.

GLOBAL DIFFERENCES/SOCIAL JUSTICE: FOSTER AN ETHICAL AWARENESS OF GLOBAL CONNECTIONS AND INEQUITIES; CONSIDER IMPACT ON SOCIETY AND ON DIFFERENT GROUPS OF PEOPLE

21st century society is both extremely diverse, at home and abroad, and more tightly connected as a global world. Preparing students to work and live collaboratively with people of different backgrounds and beliefs is crucial for their future success. To this end, students must develop an awareness of global connections and inequities, in order to understand their own place in relation to cultural, economic, historical, political, religious and social currents. Students should also consider the ways in which different groups – defined by region, nation, culture, religion, race, class and/or gender – might perceive, interpret and feel the impact of the same topic differently based on their values, customs, and circumstances.



VISION FOR THE RENEWED CORE

NINE ASPECTS OF THE WHOLE PERSON

EDUCATING THE WHOLE PERSON

THINKING

Developing **critical, analytical, and creative thinking skills** in order to interpret and question information, analyze problems from multiple perspectives, make connections among disciplines and ideas, and balance subjectivity and objectivity.

KNOWING

Developing **foundational knowledge** – across a range of disciplinary approaches and grounded in the Jesuit, Catholic tradition in the liberal arts – that provides a lens through which to examine and interpret contemporary issues and one’s own life experiences.

DISCOVERING

Developing a **curiosity and lifelong love of learning** that guides the pursuit of passions, interests, and ongoing inquiry throughout one’s life, and invites the potential to find God in all things.

REFLECTING

Developing an **ability and process for discernment**, for assessing the experiences of one’s life, making meaning, and actively participating in the process of one’s own emotional, spiritual, and intellectual growth.

RELATING

Developing an **ability to relate to others in the world** by embracing diversity, forming and sustaining meaningful relationships, and effectively communicating ideas.

BELIEVING

Developing and exploring a **relationship with faith and reason**; critically engaging religious traditions and committing to a core set of values.

CREATING

Developing the **ability to seek inspiration and use the imagination** to contribute to the world through invention, the production of knowledge, and the creation of art.

ACTING

Developing a **passion and aptitude for making an impact** in the world and in one’s own life – as an informed, caring, ethical person with a commitment to service and social justice.

WORKING

Developing the **skills for a meaningful and successful career**, including formation of a strong sense of self by which to navigate one’s professional path.



INSPIRE INTELLECTUAL ENGAGEMENT

The Core will inspire the Boston College community – faculty and students alike – to engage in the life of the mind. Here students will be challenged to examine their preexisting notions of the world and of themselves, and to discover areas of passion and interest. The Core will foster lifelong learners who are instilled with an abiding intellectual curiosity and whose intellectual engagement affects their everyday action.

The Core will inspire intellectual engagement by:

- Tapping into individual passions, research foci, and expertise of faculty
- Providing students opportunities to explore areas of academic interest
- Enabling students to make meaningful connections among course content, perennial questions, and contemporary issues
- Fostering relationships between faculty and students around shared areas of intellectual interest
- Exposing students to a diversity of disciplines, perspectives, and ideas
- Encouraging students and faculty to pursue meaning and truth in a range of disciplines
- Helping students understand their own place in relation to cultural, economic, historical, political, religious, and social currents
- Challenging students with a high level of intellectual rigor
- Supporting students to explore outside their comfort zone
- Creating active, participatory learning experiences

THE VISION

EXPERIENCE



ESTABLISH AN ENDURING FOUNDATION

The Core will provide students with foundational knowledge and skills for a lifetime, rooted in the liberal arts and Jesuit, Catholic tradition. This will include the ability to think critically, creatively solve problems from multiple perspectives, engage meaningfully with people of different backgrounds and beliefs, form arguments and express opinions, and act with a sense of moral responsibility and ethical commitment. The Core will shape students who are informed and engaged citizens of the world – people who lead meaningful lives of consequence.

The Core will establish an enduring foundation by:

- Providing students with a foundation of knowledge across the disciplines, rooted in essential traditions and engaging pressing contemporary issues
- Preparing students to work and live collaboratively with people of different backgrounds and beliefs
- Fostering habits of mind that are alert to, and engage with, cultural differences
- Creating an awareness of global connections as well as inequities
- Building a foundation of skills to critically analyze and interpret information
- Developing communication skills for the 21st century, grounded in written and oral eloquence
- Fostering imagination and creativity
- Providing a foundation for the free exploration of ethics, beliefs, and social justice

THE VISION

EXPERIENCE

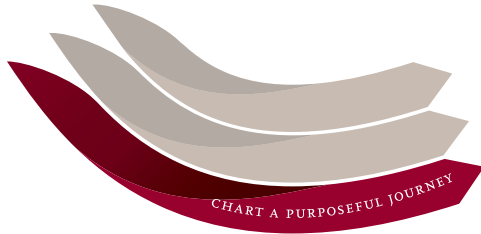


CHART A PURPOSEFUL JOURNEY

The Core at Boston College will deliver a coherent and purposeful shared experience and provide tools for reflection so each student can chart his or her journey during college and throughout adult life. Incorporating a process of discernment, students will be encouraged to make meaning from varied learning experiences, channel passions and interests into lifelong pursuits, and hone their direction for the future.

The Core will chart a purposeful journey by:

- Providing a coherent experience with structure and intentionality
- Communicating the value of the Core and its components
- Striking a balance between prescribed learning experiences and self-guided exploration
- Offering guidance to help each student navigate his or her journey, including potential connections to different parts of the university
- Integrating times for reflection and discernment where students can define “what they love, what they’re good at, and what the world needs”
- Supporting students as they imagine how their BC academic experience will lead to a sense of vocation in their adult lives