

History of Core Review/Revision

While discussions of possible core review/revision were occasional over a period of time – 2002-2004 – actual action in that direction did not begin until 2005, when a group of five faculty and one administrator was sent to a General Education conference sponsored by the AAC&U. That group reported to the Committee the highlights of that conference and it was decided that this AAC&U group would serve as consultants during the review process.

1st report from Curriculum Committee last faculty meeting of the semester: Dec., 2004

“Everyone’s favorite topic (people have been talking about it for years): the Core itself—next semester we will begin discussions about reviewing the Core. Since we’re in the midst of Middle States preparations, we’re not going to dive into a major review next semester. We’re simply discussing how to go about this major project. However, it is coming and you will be hearing from us in short order.”

Meanwhile, after this meeting the committee chair asked for feedback from those who thought it was time to review and perhaps revise the core. She received 58 responses: 56 said yes, 2 said no (the list with comments is available).

2nd report at last faculty meeting of year: May, 2005

“Core review discussions: A group of six people were sent to the General Education conference sponsored by the AAC&U. That group reported to the Committee the highlights of that conference. It was decided that this AAC&U group will serve as consultants during the review process. The Committee also plans to use the fall Faculty Assembly Day to begin a general discussion of the Core review/revision process. The two main points to keep in mind at this moment is that Core review could take 3-4 years and every faculty member must be involved in the process.”

In 2005-06, the Curriculum Committee spent the vast majority of the academic year on the process of reviewing our current Core and focusing on faculty input about the Core and the possibility of change. The following is a summary of that process:

1. The Fall Faculty Assembly Day was dedicated to small group discussion of the question: “What characteristics should a Naz graduate have?”

3rd report: Oct. 15, 2005

Short report at the faculty meeting about the collation of the themes and similarities of characteristics of a Naz grad gathered at Faculty Assembly that fall.

2. In November, Deborah Dooley and Matt Temple (with email input from Monica Weis) gave the committee the historical background on the current Core. The Curriculum Committee believed they needed to know how this Core came about.
3. The committee used the above list of Themes and Similarities from Faculty Assembly Day as the basis for department/group interviews to get more specifics about the current Core and what faculty would like to see for a new Core.
4. At the same time, the whole Committee split into two smaller groups: one group to look at other college Cores and to work on a set of goals or principles of general education. The other group analyzed our own Core – looking at syllabi, transcripts, NSSE (National Survey of Student Engagement) data, etc. (see attached reports).
5. Cathy Quenin, Deb Dooley and Ginny Skinner-Linnenberg also attended the AAC&U conference on general education in March to gather new ideas about current theories of general education and what types of processes colleges were using to assess their core and/or redesign it.

4th report: March 31, 2006

The whole report was about the Core revision process: the committee chair reported on the information they had gotten from Faculty Assembly Day where they asked for the characteristics the faculty wanted to see in our Naz grads. Then she outlined what the Curriculum Committee had been doing. It had split into two groups, one that gathered data on the current core and one to investigate core models from other colleges. At same time, they were visiting departments to get feedback on the current core and what people wanted to see in a new core. The committee had also asked and received volunteers for the taskforce to continue to review the old core and to develop a new core. The chair further asked for other volunteers willing to work on the effort. (Notes that detail just what was said at this meeting are available.)

6. At the April 27, 2006 meeting, the Curriculum Committee voted unanimously to charge a Task Force to “envision a Core suitable for the Nazareth community.” All gathered information was turned over to the Task Force made up of some Curriculum Committee members and other faculty and staff who represent their various academic areas. These faculty/staff volunteered and were chosen on a first-come basis and on trying to achieve a balanced representation across the academic schools and the appropriate non-academic divisions:

Candide Carrasco (chair)
 Scott Campbell
 Joe DaBoll-Lavoie
 Deborah Dooley (ex-officio)
 Rich Hartmann
 Tom Lappas

Cathy Quenin
 Marlee Burgess
 Linda Searing
 Ginny Skinner-Linnenberg
 Mary Skvorak
 Carl Weins

Yamuna Sangarasivan

Adrielle Mitchell (to take Ginny's
place when she goes on
sabbatical Sp. 07)

5th report: May 2006—year-end report from Curriculum

At the April 27 meeting, the Curriculum Committee voted unanimously to charge the Task Force to “envision a Core suitable for the Nazareth community.” All gathered information was turned over to the Task Force made up of some Curriculum Committee members and other faculty and staff who represent their various academic areas.

7. In June a team of five people attended a week long Institute sponsored by the AAC&U where they worked with a consultant assigned specifically to them and the College's needs. This included refining the process of Core evaluation, re-design and assessment. Those attending were:

Candide Carrasco
Deborah Dooley
Rich Hartmann
Ginny Skinner-Linnenberg
Mary Skvorak

During the 2006-07 academic year, the Core Taskforce met every week examining mission statements and general education curricula, and held lively discussions on the current Nazareth core and the models for its replacement:

1. The Taskforce collected different mission statements and general education curricula from many other comparable colleges and universities, then looked at Nazareth's new strategic plan, which committed us to redesign the undergraduate core curriculum.
2. They examined the mission and goals statements from the CAS departments and draft of CAS learning outcomes statements.
3. They drafted the principles for a liberal studies core curriculum and worked on defining learning outcomes from the principles' statement.
4. The liberal studies principles document and learning outcomes draft were forwarded to the curriculum Taskforce at the end of this semester.
5. In Spring 2007, the Taskforce worked to achieve consensus on terms and definitions.

6. It began to move toward a model for a new core: each Taskforce member developed and proposed an ideal core model based on the principles and learning outcomes they had discussed. Three meetings were dedicated to reviewing these models, discussing them thoroughly.

The Taskforce held several summer retreats to continue its work on the models. In the Fall 2007, the Taskforce used the Faculty Assembly Day to gather more input.

1. The Taskforce reviewed the notes and summary document from Faculty Assembly Day.
2. They received a proposal from the philosophy department, discussed it, and invited Heidi Northwood to address the Taskforce on the proposal.
3. To gather more input from the faculty, they held six 1 ½ hour forums over a period of six weeks.
4. Following this, the Taskforce broke into small groups to continue refining learning outcomes and attempting to map them to components of the core curriculum and major programs.
5. The Taskforce met with the Chair of the Curriculum Committee to discuss the process of bringing recommendations to the Curriculum Committee.
6. The Taskforce held a one day retreat to discuss how to coordinate next steps with curriculum committee
7. They reviewed faculty input on the Core Principles and made final revisions to it.
8. They completed a draft of liberal studies learning outcomes and planned the shape and content of Faculty Assembly Day for January 2008.
9. In January 2008, the Taskforce once again garnered information from Faculty Assembly Day, asking departments to create “burning questions” that drive their discipline. These questions would become a basis for core courses.
10. The Curriculum Committee and the Taskforce held a five hour retreat at the beginning of the summer of 2008 so the Taskforce could explain their work, the proposed model of a new core and to hand over all information and the rest of the work to Curriculum.

The Curriculum Committee met several times over the summer of 2008 to refine the process for proposing a new core and refining the model, at the same time preparing to gather more faculty input.

1. The committee is meeting every week for 1-2 hours to discuss the Core (and other issues that come before it).

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2. Members of the committee are meeting with individual departments to get input about the core model (strengths , weaknesses, etc.).