

TO: Barbara D'Ambrosia, Chair, Faculty Council (FC)
FROM: Committee on Academic Policies (CAP)
RE: CAP Report on the Proposed revision to Integrated Courses component of the Integrative Core Curriculum (the Proposal)
DATE: April 10, 2017
CC: Jeanne Colleran, Provost and Academic Vice President
Margaret Farrar, Dean, College of Arts and Sciences (CAS)
Rodney Hessinger, Director, Center for Teaching & Learning
Anne Kugler, Associate Dean for the Humanities & Coordinator of CAS Graduate Programs, CAS
Peter Kvidera, Director, Integrative Core (I-Core) Curriculum
Alan Miciak, Dean, Boler School of Business

Charge from FC: FC forwarded the Proposal submitted by Dr. Peter Kvidera (Director, Integrative Core Curriculum) and the Integrative Core Curriculum Committee, to CAP, an FC committee. Furthermore, FC recommended that CAP work with both administrative contact persons, Dr. Rodney Hessinger and Dr. Anne Kugler.

Procedure that CAP followed: CAP had three discussions about the Proposal: one on 3/22/17 and two on 3/24; provided brief feedback (Appendix 1). During the process, Dr. Hessinger, Dr. Kugler, and Dr. Kvidera were informed of our findings. They were invited to and joined all or some of our meetings. CAP had one-hour open hearings for the Proposal on 4/4/17 and 4/5/17, respectively. Meanwhile, FC organized an online forum on Canvas running until 4/18/17. Two Student union representatives – Academic Affairs Committee: Mo Reilly, Zak Winters came to the open hearing and 4 questions/replies were posted online (Appendix 2).

Summary of the proposal: This Proposal is addressing imminent curricular issues face by all students affected by the I-core such as a shortage of linked course offerings, a shortage of offerings to meet distribution requirements, and a shortage of courses appropriate for the first year. Here, the I-Core Committee proposes the following revisions to the Integrated Courses component of the Core:

1. Have an explicit distribution requirement, asking students to take one course in the Humanities (PL and TRS excluded), one course in the Social Sciences, and one course in the Natural Sciences.
2. Require one set of linked courses. The goals for these pairs would exclusively be the integration of knowledge across disciplines or domains of knowledge (there is no longer the content requirement associated with ENW and EHE).

This proposal would maintain Engaging the Global Community (EGC) as currently designed, to allow for global engagement, as well as integration, in the Core.

As can be seen from the Proposal, the reduction of linked courses from two sets to one effectively alleviates the problem of 'shortage of linked course offerings'; having an explicit and freshmen friendly distribution requirement solves the problem of 'a shortage of offerings to meet distribution requirements and a shortage of courses appropriate for the first year'. In addition, the Proposal also makes it more feasible for students to transferring credits into JCU.

During our review process, CAP had the following questions regarding the nature, learning goals, assessment, and implementation of the distribution requirement (see below). The I-Core committee has carefully addressed all those questions in the updated Proposal.

1. Distributed courses:
 - a. descriptions such as ‘introductory’ and ‘no pre-requisite’ were used to describe the distributed courses. However, it was also mentioned that ‘upper division’ courses may also be appropriate for ‘distributed course’. We ask the I-Core Committee to make it clear the nature and requirement of the distributed courses.
 - b. In ‘learning goal’ addressed, it stated ‘Demonstrate an integrative knowledge of the human and natural worlds: understand the perspectives of humanities/science/social science.’ Learning the distributed courses may not necessarily demonstrate an integrative knowledge of the human and natural world. We ask the I-Core Committee to clarify how learning the distributed courses may contribute to the stated learning goal.
 - c. The learning goals for humanities and science are switched.
 - d. In ‘Expectations: Each course will introduce students to the foundational skills and methods in the respective discipline.’ We suggest that ‘knowledge’ be added to ‘skills’ and ‘methods’.
 - e. The proposal estimates ‘that we would need approximately 15 sections of “distribution courses” each semester per category (humanities/science/social science). However, the ‘total sections for Humanities courses’ for Fall 2013 and 2014 were 13 and 7 sections, respectively. It turned out these numbers underestimated the capacity to offer humanities courses. We ask the I-Core Committee to estimate it again and provide more accurate estimation.

2. Advising

It is not apparent if students under the current I-core will be automatically subject to the proposed I-core or they have a choice to stay in the current core and how they should proceed. Students under the current I-core may have taken 0 or 1 or 2 pairs of linked courses. How will they be affected by the proposed I-core? Students union representatives asked similar questions: what if students already took 2 linked pairs? How to handle sophomores who have completed part of the integrative core? In addition, clarify if there is ‘double dipping’ and how. Faculty also raised additional questions regarding ‘double dipping’ through online forum (see Appendix 2). We ask the I-Core Committee address them more explicitly (such as using a table) to provide clear pathways for students and inform faculty advisors.

3. Assessment

Who will and how can they assess the distributed courses and new linked courses? Who will manage and coordinate this process? Who design the rubrics? How do they obtain input from faculty? We ask the Core Committee to address these questions with realistic timelines.

4. Implementation

If the Proposal passes and is implemented in Fall 2017, we need the distributed courses this Fall. We need a clear process with reasonable timelines such as what courses can be counted as ‘distributed courses’ and how.

5. In “administrative structure on Core committee: Directors and Subcommittees” There is no “Distribution Courses subcommittee”.

CAP also raised the following issues which were largely beyond the scope of the Proposal which aimed to address imminent issues discussed earlier. We will summarize them below because addressing them in the future may further strengthen the I-Core and benefit our students.

1. In the Proposal, the writing component is reserved while QA requirement is removed from both courses in the linked pair. We wish to point out that in the Proposal, the pair of linked courses has no content requirement, unlike the current I-Core which requires ENW or EHE. Therefore, both courses in the Proposal may not come from disciplines where QA component may be more naturally incorporated. A few concerns/suggestions have been raised.
 - a. As compared to the current I-Core, this elimination may lead to less training in QA for some students. It will be helpful to track how many and what kind (such as majors) students will be affected by this change. This may give insight on possible mechanisms to address this in the future.
 - b. Another concern is related to the ‘writing’ component, which may make it difficult for some disciplines to implement without sacrificing the content of the subject if they were to contribute to the linked courses. On the other hand, one of the Academic Learning Goals is ‘communicate skillfully in multiple forms of expression’, which does not limit the communication form to writing. For example, in addition to writing and oral expression, discipline-specific forms of communication can be not only effective but also indispensable such as drawing and describing a schematic diagram to explain a natural phenomenon or a chain reaction, or designing a flow chart to illustrate a computer algorithm or manufacturing process, and etc. Opening up the definition of multiple forms of expression to include more disciplinary-specific forms of expression is beyond this Proposal. It may be helpful for the I-Core committee to consider this in their future discussions. This will make it more feasible for more disciplines to contribute to the linked courses; allow for more choices and training in discipline-specific communication for our students.

2. The departments or disciplines included in the Proposal for distributed courses are largely drawn from the old ‘Distributed Core’ with a few additions approved by faculty vote in April 2016 (see the Proposal). It may be a good idea to revisit this and make it possible to add other and/or new majors in the future.

In summary, the Proposal targets urgent challenges in the I-Core. Issues raised by CAP during the review process have been carefully addressed by the updated proposal. We believe that the Proposal is ready to go out for a vote of the Faculty, if FC wishes to do so.

CAP

Peggy Finucane
Rick Greci
Greg Farnell
Roger Purdy
Linda Seiter
Dianna Taylor
Peifang Tian (Chair)

Appendix 1: CAP Brief feedback to ‘Proposed revision to Integrated Courses component of the Integrative Core Curriculum’

Questions:

1) distributed courses:

a) consistency of 'introductory' vs 'upper level' and 'no pre-requisite'

b) Learning goals:

need to clarification how they help with 'integrated' core

clarification: who decides the learning goals

c) provide evidence that we can deliver enough sections for 'humanities':

one suggestion of giving designations to a course: ISJ or EGC or 'humanities'

provide # of sections for 'humanities' courses (and ISJ)

d) some majors are not listed in dist. courses. Does it make it more challenging for these majors? (they don't get the benefit of double dipping) is it possible to include some language/process to allow for future modification for dist. departments to include depts not listed here or new majors/depts?

e) the designation of distribution departments: do those refer to departments or majors or course designations? Please be consistent.

2) clarification for 'advising section'

3) assessment: clarification

4) concern over linked courses: there is W, but no QA. Is it possible to require either W or QA? QA may not be included by many distribution courses even for 'nature science'.

Appendix 2: Open hearing and online forum discussions

Open hearing

Student union representatives – Academic Affairs Committee. Mo Reilly, Zak Winters

Questions (Q) and Answers (A):

Q. Will double dipping be allowed in the proposed new core?

A. No. Linked courses will not be allowed to count for distribution courses. Double dipping is allowed between core courses and courses within a major/minor.

Q. How many pairs of linked courses will be required?

A. One pair between any two disciplines. The modified integrative core will no longer requiring ENW, EHE.

Q. What if students already took two linked pairs?

A. They will not be required to fulfill the distribution course requirements.

Q. How to handle sophomores who have completed part of the integrative core?

A. If students took ENW linked, then it may possibly count for 1 linked and for 2 distribution (for example science and humanities). If they also took EGC (social science) then they will not be required to take a social science distribution course. Double dipping will be allowed during transition to the new core for classes already taken. If a student has already had TRS101, they will be required to take only one 2xx or 3xx.

Q. Why is the core changing? Was it due to staffing issues?

A. Yes – staffing and scheduling constraints caused the need to evolve the integrative core. But we are still maintaining the integrative nature that is desirable and in demand from industry.

Q. Will current students who have not yet taken courses in the core be required to shift to the new core model?

A. Yes. If students have not yet taken linked courses, or TRS, they will be required to shift to the new model. All students will be placed in the new model, although we will honor whatever courses they have already taken.

Q. What are the recommendations for Fall scheduling?

A. There appears to be significant support among faculty for this new model. Officially faculty should advise based on the current existing core model until the vote occurs. However, if students have already taken one linked pair, it might be better to register for other parts of the core (ISJ, EGC, CAPA, etc) until the result of the vote is known.

Online forum discussions

Q: I have some concern that 'double dipping' is conflating different scenarios. For example, I worked with Roy Day to develop an ENW linked course pair that is two science courses (CH/PH 108). This course integrates lab and 'lecture' components to model research based pedagogy. If a student took this linked pair, I would see no real reason (outside of particular major programs) for a student to be required to take another natural science to meet a distributive requirement. To me this does not equate to double dipping. I would rather see a focus on the outcomes desired in the core,. Meeting those outcomes could come in different forms (I know this does present complexity for managing the core).

A: One could certainly make a case in your instance, Mark, but we have to look at the larger precedent that would be established. If a student took a pair of linked classes that involved two Humanities, should they then also be off the hook for the Humanities distribution?

Opening the door to having double-dipping in this fashion will create two unwanted pressures: 1) pressure on professors to create classes that try to serve both the linked and distribution markets (straining the learning goals in the process). Most linked pairs involve upper division classes (yours with Roy is an exception to the rule). To meet the goals of the Integrative Core, we should keep it that way. 2) if we say "two classes from the same division" is enough to check the Distribution box, we ironically will be encouraging pairs from closely aligned disciplines. If we want to see meaningful integration, it does not behoove us to incentivize keeping pairs within divisions. As a historian, I have team-taught with English professors and I have team-taught with Biology professors. There is no doubt in my mind that students were pressed into doing more high order integration when the disciplines were more disparate.

I think we most definitely should think more about the possibility of double-dipping, but it is a complex issue that will require time to study before we can craft smart policy.

Comments: Thanks for the thoughtful response Rodney. Here is my concern though. There is likely to be some change to transfer student policies regarding Core, so there are lots of moving parts.

In the current formulation of the Integrative Core there is only 1 natural science required (as part of the ENW linked pair). The biggest staffing issues, particularly if we want to staff core courses with full time faculty are in the sciences where in the past a large portion of non-science major courses taught by

part time faculty. If we require a distributive requirement for science AND only 1 link, I worry that the interesting ENW pairs will go away, in favor of students selecting an easier to schedule stand alone science and taking a link that does not include a science. Paired with the staffing concerns, it might make more sense to offer some interesting links and stand alone courses, but still only require the single science for any non-science major.

Reducing things in this way would make sense financially I believe, meet student needs and might also help with the transfer student issue. I am not suggesting that we reduce the other distributive elements, and students would still need to satisfy a science requirement.

Comments: I support the proposed changes. They are much more feasible in terms of our current capacity to deliver the core. They also make more sense pedagogically in my opinion as it is difficult to be carefully inter-disciplinary without some form of disciplinary lens.