

To: Purdue University Faculty Senate
From: Teresa Taber Doughty
Chair, Core Curriculum Committee
Date: September 1, 2011

Re: Progress of Core Curriculum Committee

In March 2011, a faculty representative from every College/School at Purdue University met with Assistant Provost Dale Whittaker to receive the charge for proposing and developing Purdue's first core curriculum. A Sharepoint site was immediately established to allow for information sharing between committee members. Administrators from each College/School were also provided access to the Sharepoint site. The committee met again in April and May to establish goals and a timeline for proposing and developing the core curriculum and its related structures (e.g., information-sharing, assessment, governance). In addition, members identified a preliminary set of essential learning outcomes for consideration as part of the core.

While the committee recessed for the summer break, the committee chair began organizing information for the committee's work in the fall. Two undergraduate students were invited to serve on the committee, one from Krannert and the other from the College of Engineering. On August 18th, a full day working retreat was held in which three goals were targeted and met: 1) confirm the essential learning outcomes for the core curriculum, 2) propose a framework/structure for how students may progress through the core curriculum, and 3) recommend a format and guidelines by which each College/School might propose a course for inclusion within Purdue's core curriculum. A 2011-12 fall semester meeting schedule was also developed with meetings scheduled twice monthly.

During the first fall meeting (August 31, 2011), committee members revisited work completed during the retreat (further defined the essential learning outcomes and proposed framework). Subcommittees were also established to address communications (new releases, website development, information forums), assessment (student assessment, program assessment), and administration and oversight (recommendations regarding how to address issues impacting student progress, transfer courses, CODOs) in regards to the core curriculum.

Since its first meeting, committee members collaboratively developed the following documents in their charge towards proposing and developing a Purdue core curriculum (see attachments): 1) Principles/Goals/Guidelines of the Core Curriculum, 2) Proposed Learning Outcomes, 3) Timeline, and 4) General Information. In addition, members are currently revising a proposed framework by which students might achieve essential learning outcomes within the core curriculum as well as information for release via news services; a white paper describing the benefits of a core curriculum to students, faculty and other stakeholders; a grid for mapping student progress through the core; and a proposed format for nominating courses to the core curriculum. These additional documents are still in various stages of development.

In sum, committee members continue to identify the main elements to be rolled out in the first phase of our work including articulating issues related to portability of courses, assessment, and oversight. Our goal is to ensure the overall process and outcome of our work is inclusive while concurrently establishing a foundation for a realistic and sustainable core curriculum that will result in benefits to Purdue students and the university overall.

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Learning Outcomes defined: the essential competencies students are expected to acquire as they progress through the core curriculum and their program of study.

Proposed Learning Outcomes

Through experiences in activities and coursework within Purdue's core curriculum, students will:

- Demonstrate effective use of **Creative Thinking** skills by combining and synthesizing existing ideas, images or expertise in original ways, working imaginatively and using a high degree of innovation and divergent thinking.
- Use the skills of **Critical Thinking** by exploring issues, ideas, artifacts, and events before accepting or formulating an opinion or conclusion.
- Demonstrate skills and characteristics of **Cultural Knowledge and Effectiveness** and that support effective and appropriate interaction in a variety of cultural contexts.
- Use **Ethical Reasoning** skills by assessing their own ethical values and the social context of problems, recognize ethical issues in a variety of settings, think about how different ethical perspectives might be applied to ethical dilemmas and consider the ramifications of alternative actions.
- Understand the value of **Global Citizenship and Social Responsibility** through the development of knowledge and skills rooted in an understanding of global consciousness and interconnectedness of the world. Students recognize the need to understand global realities and social responsibilities and develop mindset as citizens of the world.
- Engage in **Information Literacy** skills and demonstrate how to identify, locate, evaluate, and effectively and responsibly use and share information for the problem at hand.
- Use **Inquiry and Analysis** skills and demonstrate the ability to know when there is a need for information and the ability to identify, locate, evaluate, and effectively and responsibly use and share that information for the problem at hand.
- Demonstrate the ability to use **Integrative Learning** skills by exhibiting an understanding and disposition, built across the curriculum and co-curriculum, from making simple connections among ideas and experiences to synthesizing and transferring learning to new, complex situations within and beyond the campus.
- Acquire knowledge about and use **Leadership skills** including individual motivation, interpersonal skills, and skills for effectively engaging groups.
- Demonstrate the skills for effective **Oral Communication** to increase knowledge, foster understanding, and/or promote change in listeners' attitudes, values, beliefs or behaviors.
- Develop **Problem-solving** skills required for designing, evaluating and implementing a strategy to answer an open-ended question or to achieve a goal.
- Engage in **Quantitative literacy** skills and increase their competencies and comfort in reasoning and solving quantitative problems from a wide array of authentic contexts, understand and create sophisticated arguments supported by quantitative evidence, and can clearly communicate those arguments in a variety of formats (e.g., words, tables, graphs, equations, etc., as appropriate).
- Demonstrate **Technology and Computer Literacy** skills that include the knowledge and ability to use computers and related technology efficiently.
- Develop **Teamwork** skills through the effort they put into team tasks, their manner of interacting with others on a team, and the quantity and quality of contributions they make to team discussions.
- Acquire increasingly sophisticated skills in **Written Communication** through iterative experiences across the curriculum while learning to work in different genres and styles and with different writing technologies.

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Principles/Goals/Guidelines of Core Curriculum Committee

Our Goal:

To propose and develop a foundation for an undergraduate core curriculum that facilitates student learning and mobility across all colleges and schools and results in Purdue graduates who are not only highly skilled in their specific disciplines but also highly competent in the 21st Century skills considered critical for success in our global world.

Vision of Purdue's Core Curriculum:

1. Learning outcomes within the core curriculum are designed to prepare students for continuous learning and expertise within disciplines. Purdue's core curriculum will be one that is outcomes-based.
2. Students will be able to satisfy the requirements of the core in multiple ways (e.g., co-curricular activities such as learning communities and a common reading program, service learning, course content requirements).
3. Learning outcomes should not necessarily be tied to course credit. However, they must be tied to a course and students must register and demonstrate how they meet outcomes (e.g., capstone project, e-portfolio).
4. The core curriculum maintains high academic standards within the disciplines.
5. The goal is to design mechanisms to permit flexibility for both academic programs and students in meeting learning outcomes with the core curriculum.

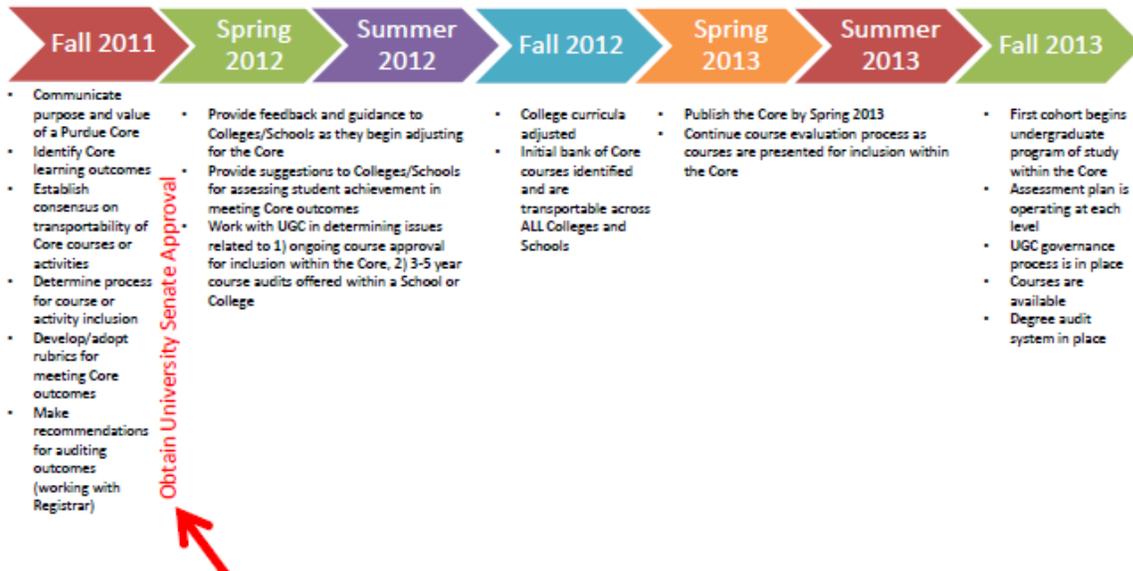
General Principles

1. The core curriculum will be faculty-governed.
2. There will be multiple opportunities for faculty, students and other stakeholders to provide feedback as the core curriculum is developed.
3. Purdue's core curriculum will be implemented beginning Fall 2013.
4. Through the mobility and portability of courses and learning outcomes, an added benefit of the core curriculum will be to protect the time to degree with an emphasis on 4-years to degree.

Operational Guidelines

1. Any course accepted for Purdue's core curriculum must be approved by the designated committee of the University Senate (and will conform to faculty guidelines specifying learning outcomes and assessment) charged with administration of the core curriculum.
2. All courses used to fulfill Purdue's core curriculum are limited to those or equivalencies approved by the designated committee of the University Senate charged with administration of the core curriculum.
3. More than one learning outcome may be satisfied in an individual course if that course is approved by the designated committee of the University Senate charged with administration of the core curriculum for all the relevant requirements.
4. Students receiving credit by assessment for a course listed within the core will also demonstrate satisfactory completion of the specific learning outcome(s) tied to the course only if it assesses the targeted learning outcome(s).

Core Curriculum Timeline



General Information

What is a "Core Curriculum"?

A core curriculum consists of a set of targeted learning outcomes considered essential to a Purdue education. It is designed to provide undergraduate students with durable and transferable skills within a broad range of academic disciplines, including: physical and biological sciences, mathematics, the social sciences, and the humanities. Including a core curriculum as part of the Purdue experience will equip graduates for success in the 21st Century skills required for a global marketplace.

Why a core curriculum?

A core curriculum with articulated learning outcomes ensures Purdue students receive a foundational knowledge and broad-based set of analytical and critical skills leading to successful employment, responsible citizenship, and continuous learning. By providing a core curriculum, Purdue faculty are able to: 1) prioritize what is essential for students to learn and whether students achieve those learning outcomes, 2) define the level of knowledge we expect every Purdue student to acquire as they experience activities within the core curriculum, 3) communicate the value and usefulness of educational activities, as they are clearly defined and meaningfully linked to learning outcomes, and 4) support and assess student progress as they engage in activities related to targeted learning outcomes.

Currently, numerous colleges and schools across Purdue University implement their own core curricula. Each is independently operated within their colleges/schools (e.g., College of Agriculture, College of Engineering, College of Liberal Arts). When a student decides to change his/her major from one program to another, coursework often does not follow the student and he/she is required to meet a new set of core requirements for a different major. Thus course content and competencies are often duplicated in order to meet the specific requirements of the new major. A shared Purdue core curriculum will facilitate a reduction in the duplication of coursework when students move between majors thus, potentially decreasing their time to degree.

How will students benefit from a core curriculum?

In addition to potentially reducing the need for duplicate coursework, a core curriculum with defined learning outcomes provide students a means by which they may better navigate their path to degree by understanding what they are expected to learn. With articulated learning outcomes, students are better able to make informed decisions about further study in a given area. And, upon completion of their degree, graduates are better able to interpret their credentials to potential employers and graduate programs and to offer assurances of their readiness.

How will faculty benefit?

Faculty benefit from a core curriculum as it allows them to specifically clarify the learning priorities of their content areas. In turn, methods for meeting student learning needs may be strategically developed and courses and programs may be organized to ensure learning outcomes are addressed. This specificity and clarification allow faculty greater ease in conducting assessment leading to evidence for improving teaching effectiveness, maintained focus on course goals and objectives, and confirmation of faculty contribution to learning within their programs.