

General Education 2.0
revising structures for the Core Curriculum
October 2011

Background. This proposal is built on philosophical and pragmatic perspectives that should govern the structure of General Education moving forward.

1. The work done leading up to the 2007 endorsement of the General Education Revision Steering Committee (GERSC) represents some of the best and boldest thinking about general education ever produced on our campus. The “Fundamental Understandings” accurately described the need for reform while the “Student Learning Objectives” presented a scope of learning that was both ambitious and comprehensive.
 - a. It is important to remember that GERSC was charged with creating a Core Curriculum that would be innovative and exceptional, that it would be something not to be obtained “anywhere,” and that by implementing it, ACU would begin to resemble the best practices benchmarked throughout the initial phases of the plan’s creation and discussion.
2. An incremental implementation of the GERSC plan has been necessary and will remain so. Implementing the plan has been both challenging and rewarding. The pedagogical shift that is taking place with regard to mobile learning, hybrid course design, large section/breakout sections, and team teaching scenarios has challenged and sharpened the more-than-60 faculty who have been involved with the first two years of preparing and teaching CORE classes.
 - a. There are ways to reduce and streamline elements of the GERSC plan that do not undermine its fundamental understandings or objectives.
3. Budget reductions in FY11 and FY12, as well as those proposed for FY 13 and beyond, have significantly impacted the original \$1.2M Vision Investment.
 - a. \$200,000 of this has already been removed; an additional \$280,000 is slated for removal in FY13. This represents a 40% reduction of the original investment.
 - b. This will render the implementation of the original GERSC recommendations impractical, if not impossible.

While the full implementation of the GERSC plan is very desirable, continued incremental implementation and targeted adjustments regarding the Foreign Language and Cultural Competencies and the number of CORE courses, their delivery, and the topics that define them are both appropriate and necessary.

Proposal – Executive Summary of Action Items

- Consolidate CORE 120 and 220 into a single three-hour course
- Consolidate CORE 320 and BIBL 440 into a single three-hour course
- Continue postponing implementation of Foreign Language competency
- Allow SPCH1315 (Public Speaking) and SPCH1321 (Business and Professional Speaking) to satisfy COMS 211
- Reduce Cornerstone from a three-credit course to a two-credit course

Proposal – Details

1. Consolidate Core 120 and 220 into a single three-hour course.
 - a. Councils vote on this structural move in November 2011; full Faculty vote in Dec. 2011.
 - b. This moves the total CORE hours from 12 to 9. *Suggested titles (note, these are only suggestions):*
 - i. CORE 110 – Cornerstone: An Introduction to Critical Thinking
 - ii. CORE 210 – Identity and Community: Connecting the Local and Global
 - iii. CORE 310 – Meaning and Mission: Creating and Discovering Truth, Beauty and Goodness
 - c. Content would be a combination of “Human Person and Identity” and “Community”
 - i. New-Course application would go to councils in Spring 2012
 - ii. Full implementation of this course would be in Fall 2012; piloted in Spring 2012 by select sections of CORE 120
 - iii. Make ENGL 112 was a pre-requisite for this course
 1. Allows for CORE to be further “distributed” through the student’s career

2. Would allow for the citation of sources piece to be more strongly inculcated in students before taking the CORE class, thereby letting it develop the idea of marshaling appropriate evidence to support an argument
 - d. Impact on Fall 2010 and Fall 2011 entering Freshmen:
 - i. For those students who entered Fall 2010 and have taken three CORE classes (110, 120, 220), their CORE requirements would be completed
 - ii. For students who entered Fall 2010 and have taken two CORE classes (110 and either 120 or 220), their CORE requirements would be completed by taking 320.
 - iii. For students who entered Fall 2011 and are taking CORE 120 in the Spring 2012 semester, their CORE requirements would be completed by taking 320.
 2. Combine CORE 320 (originally titled “Transcendence,” now being piloted as “Discovery and Creation of Meaning”) and BIBL 440 (“Vocation and Mission”) into a single 3-credit course
 - a. The combined course would be a team-taught course with 2 or 3 professors
 - b. Neither course has moved significantly past the initial pilot stage, so there is not a great deal of expectation to “unwind” into a new paradigm
 - i. CORE 320 is being piloted in Fall 2011 for the first time
 - ii. BIBL 440 has not yet been piloted; though discussions are taking place in DBMM regarding its structure and scope
 1. Some concern about overlap between BIBL 440 and the Capstone requirement for all students
 - a. Combining BIBL/CORE would help keep these distinct
 - c. DBMM would likely need additional faculty to staff BIBL 440 (≥ 1 FTE), given their participation in CORE classes and the unusually large student/faculty ratios already present in General Education Bible classes
 - d. The consolidation would happen as follows:
 - i. CORE 320 merges with BIBL 440 into a BCOR class, 3-credit hours
 1. Bible requirements move from 14 credit hours to 15 credit hours
 2. Credentialed Bible faculty must be present as one of the team members teaching the course
3. Foreign Language Requirement would remain on hold
 - a. Requirement as voted on in 2007: “Successful completion of six hours of FL at ACU with a grade of C or better, or equivalent transfer, AP or CLEP credit.”
 - b. FL requirement has yet to be implemented
 - i. Successful implementation would require ≥ 1.5 FTE Foreign Language faculty
 1. Current budget reductions will not support this
 - ii. Note: Cultural Competency requirement has also yet to be implemented
 - c. Significant concern about the inability to implement Foreign Language requirement
 - i. FL is an important part of reaching our vision to have students think missionally, critically, and *globally*
 - ii. Aspirational schools have more FL required of all students
 1. These are almost always done within the confines of a well-defined general education sequence
4. Recommendation regarding COMS 211
 - a. Make COMS 211 the general education communication course for most ACU students, but allow students to transfer in a Speech 111-type course (Texas common course SPCH1301).
 - i. Pro: becomes more transfer-friendly
 - ii. Pro: makes the “pure ACU degree” (that is, those with limited or no transfer credit) more distinct, without being completely exclusive
 - iii. Con: if SPCH111 satisfies certain people; why wouldn’t it work for everyone?

1. Would not want to “carve out” a sub-set of students (i.e., cannot transfer SPCH111 if you’ve started school at ACU; but if you took it dual credit in high school, it would count)
2. Need to make the transfer of SPCH111 possible for anyone: such as dual credit in high school, ACU sophomore who takes SPCH at Collin County, transfer with 9 hours from a community college, transfer with 59 hours from Harding

Note: This recommendation does not have a direct budgetary impact, but could possibly help with the recruiting of students, both transfer and traditional, which would have a net positive impact.

5. Recommendations regarding Cornerstone
 - a. Make Cornerstone a 2-credit course
 - i. This saves one additional hour
 - ii. Pedagogically, Cornerstone resembles a two-credit class
 1. Monday in Cullen is a mass section
 2. Wednesday/Friday (2 meetings, 50 minutes each) are 30-person class meetings with discussion, presentation, quizzes, writing, etc.
6. What to do with the “saved hours”?
 - a. Saved hours from consolidating CORE 120 and 220 = 3 hours
 - i. Students would choose a course from the Social Science, Humanities, Fine Arts menu
 1. These areas (percentage-wise) lost the most in the shift to the new Core; this would provide some opportunity to recapture some of their position in General Education.
 - a. This is also the largest menu of courses, so that the effect of adding back three hours is distributed over the widest number of departments, thereby mitigating against the need for additional faculty.
 - ii. Some students who brought in AP, CLEP, or Dual Credit in History or Social Science would now be able to apply to a General Education requirement, thereby freeing up elective credit.
 - b. Saved hours from consolidation of CORE 320 and BIBL 440 = 2 hours and Cornerstone reduction = 1 hour
 - i. Students would choose a course from the Social Science, Humanities, Fine Arts menu