Proposed Changes to Core Curriculum

4-8-24, submitted by the Core Curriculum Council and the Academic Excellence Committee

As the culmination of a two-year process, the Core Curriculum Council presents a package of recommended changes to the Academic Excellence Committee.

Timeline

As a reminder, this has been the process leading up this moment:

Fall 2021- Spring 2022	**Faculty Senate Core Curriculum Review Committee** is appointed and fulfills its charge to review the Core Curriculum by examining its assessment reports, gathering feedback from stakeholders, and doing a deep dive into its workings
Spring 2022	Core Curriculum Review Committee recommends the creation of **four-institution level competencies for general education** and **a new process and calendar for Core assessment**: approved by FS vote
Fall 2022	Appointment of faculty **Quantitative and Scientific Reasoning (MA/NSC) and Critical and Creative Thinking (FAR/HUM/SSC/LT/HT/RT) Assessment Committees**
	Core Curriculum Review Committee submits its report to the Faculty Senate
	The Faculty Senate and Provost respond to the report
Spring 2023	Theresa Gaul, Director of the Core, offers two proposals (**new committee structure and changes to emendation policy**) based on the Core Curriculum Review Report for AEC, Faculty Senate and Faculty Assembly approval: approved by Faculty Assembly vote
Fall 2023	Appointment of **Communication (OCO/WCO/WEM) Assessment Committee**

	Appointment of Core Curriculum Council

Responding to 2022 Recommendations

The Core Curriculum Council has focused on the following recommendations coming from the Core Curriculum Review Committee. In doing so, it has relied on the past work of the Core Curriculum Review Committee, the HMVV Committee, the WEM Committee, and the new Core Assessment Committees. A total of at least **65 faculty members** have been involved in the discussions leading to the current proposals.

Recommendations from the 2022 Core Curriculum Review Report:

1. Innovation

Strengthen the current Core by being open to curricular innovations and adopting some High-Impact Practices (HIPs)

2. Flexibility/choice

• Consider allowing students more range of choice in selecting courses within areas of the Core. This may involve, for example, adjusting rules related to prefixes.
• Revisit and possibly revise the Global Awareness and Cultural Awareness outcomes to consider whether additional kinds of learning than are currently represented may lead students to achieve the competencies.
• Expand the number of courses within Core areas such as Global Awareness, Oral Communication, and Written Communication 2 where students often have trouble finding available sections.
• Consider whether total hours to meet the Core should be reduced given the planned reduction in the number of credit hours required to graduate from 124 to 120. SACSCOC requires a minimum of 30 Core credit hours; TCU's minimum is currently 39 hours.

3. Simplify

A concise statement of the Core Curriculum's mission, purpose, and benefits should be developed and shared widely:

• Design a clear and easy-to-understand advising sheet.
• Reduce or eliminate redundancies, such as those identified between Human Experiences and Endeavors and Heritage, Mission, Vision, and Values offerings.

- Competencies and student learning outcomes should be rephrased in all areas of the Core to incorporate language that ensures active learning and indicates measures that can be assessed.
- Clear titles should replace obscure acronyms for the sections of the Core.
- Incentivize and galvanize faculty understanding of and support for the Core.

The Core Curriculum Council Response: Recommendations (Fall 2023)

After robust and lengthy meetings every two weeks this semester, the Core Curriculum Council makes seven recommendations. They are conducting additional research on several issues and may have additional recommendations forthcoming.

In the sections that follow, we recommend seven changes that retain aspects of our Core Curriculum that are effective and time-tested:

- Further enhancement of the outcomes-based design that was unique at the time of the Core's design
- Distribution of requirements and hours across the Core
- The overlay feature, which emphasizes integrated learning and adds flexibility for students
- Oversight of requirements of Core are managed by faculty specialists in departments, colleges, and interdisciplinary bodies like the Core Curriculum Council

What problems are being solved by these proposed changes?

- Puts student learning—what they should know and be able to do—front and center in the Core
- Improves ability to communicate the value of the Core for student learning
- TCU's mission statement permeates the Core through the Responsible Citizenship overlay
- Infuses diversity, equity, and inclusion throughout the Core through the newly configured student learning outcomes in the Responsible Citizenship overlay
- Works in partnership with the goals of Finding Ourselves in Community and aids the institutionalization of that project by bringing FSC courses into the Core
- Supports transfer students' progress
- Supports all students' timely progress through the elimination of confusing redundancies and the development of streamlined advising tools
- Provides direction for faculty in teaching and advising

- Eases the learning curve for new faculty advisors
- Provides the aligned, mapped, and assessable general education curriculum required by SACSCOC

Core Curriculum Council Recommendations (Fall 2023)

You can find the current grid diagram of the Core and learning outcomes on the [Core Curriculum website](#). For additional details about these recommendations, consult Appendices: [1] Competencies-based organization of Core with proposed changes and [2] Proposed New Outcomes 11-10-23.

1. **Reorganize the curricular requirements of the Core Curriculum to align under the [four institution-level competencies](#) in general education approved by the Faculty Senate in 2022.**

   Rationale

   - The four competencies—Critical and Creative Thinking, Quantitative and Scientific Reasoning, Communication, and Responsible Citizenship—clearly and concisely express our goals for student learning in TCU's Core Curriculum. Each area of the Core and all course requirements in the Core map up to these four competencies.

   - Reorganizing the Core requirements to emphasize these competencies will help all stakeholders better understand the goals of the Core and the way students' coursework comes together to help them achieve them.

   - The current organization of the Core does not explicitly connect to these competencies, and the names of the sections of the Core and their acronyms (HEE, HMVV, and EC) are opaque in their meaning.

   - The reorganization will enable the development of advising tools that are easier to use and understand for students, faculty, and advisors.

2. **Adjust vetting process and how courses count for students**

   Rationale

   - Allowing instructors to vet any course in up to any two requirements plus WEM (excluding WCO and OCO) will encourage creativity and interdisciplinarity in new Core course proposals while also defining a course's role in the Core Curriculum in terms of the outcomes it meets rather than the previous organization of requirements into HEE, EC, and HMVV.

- Having courses count for students in the same areas in which they are vetted will minimize confusion for students and advisors as they are planning their course schedules. It will also allow faculty to concentrate on fewer outcomes.

- A limit on the number of courses students may take in the same prefix will ensure breadth of study.

3. **Center diversity, equity, and inclusion in the outcomes of Cultural Awareness (CA), Global Awareness (GA), Citizenship and Social Values (CSV).**

   Rationale

   - CA, GA, and CSV form the heart of the TCU Core Curriculum, most closely mapping up to our TCU mission statement and drawing on the longstanding goal of liberal education to enable citizens in a free society to contribute to the greater good. In our world today, it is more important than ever that we recognize diversity, equity, and inclusion as central to these missions. The ability to analyze and understand the varieties of human experience and how they shape identity, to communicate and collaborate across differences, and to work together to ensure a just world for all those who inhabit it must be understood and emphasized as key aims for a general education curriculum at an institution with the mission statement TCU possesses.

   - Infusing the student learning outcomes in CA, GA, and CSV with DEI-related language and goals makes this priority visible to all participants in the Core Curriculum. It will encourage faculty members to continue teaching or develop new courses containing DEI content and employing inclusive pedagogies, thus further enriching the curriculum.

   - Learning is a cumulative process requiring iterative exposures and experiences to take hold and grow. Incorporating DEI-related student learning outcomes in the three areas of the Core that are overlays spreads the cumulative effects even further throughout the Core, heightening student learning over time and across the curriculum.

   - Given the lack of resources in the form of faculty lines for implementing the DEI Essential Competency, as resolved by the Faculty Assembly in 2018 and 2019, this integrated approach ensures that DEI content and approaches reach students and impact their learning as soon as possible.

- If more resources in the form of faculty lines becomes available in the future, we can revisit the conversation about a separate requirement in DEI within the new structure we're proposing. Its flexibility allows for future changes.

4. **Create a process to allow Finding Ourselves in Community (FSC) courses to simultaneously be approved for CA, if the faculty member wishes**

   Rationale: The student learning outcomes for FSC are a close match to the existing students learning outcomes and proposed revised student learning outcomes for CA. Creating a dual approval process will both support FSC's institutionalization across the five-year period of the TCU Quality Enhancement Project and usher those courses into the Core Curriculum to its enrichment.

5. **Eliminate the two-prefix rule in Natural Sciences (NSC).**

   Rationale

   - This rule has particularly impeded transfer students' progress, since students in community colleges or dual enrollment programs may be advised to take courses in sequence, such as BIOL I and II. When they arrive at TCU, they discover they must take a third NSC course since their previous courses did not have two different prefixes. Because transfer students as a group tend to be more diverse ethnically, racially, economically, and age-wise than non-transfer TCU students, this rule has important DEI implications.

   - The two-prefix rule was designed to ensure broadscale literacy in the sciences. With the proposed shift of the competency toward "scientific reasoning" rather than "literacy," this justification becomes less persuasive. Indeed, taking a second course in an area may result in stronger skills in reasoning and thus higher levels of accomplishment in meeting the outcome.

   - The impact on enrollments across CSE will be minor among students already enrolled at TCU. Very few students, other than majors, will pursue sequenced courses in NSC since the courses tend to get more difficult as the progress. Most of the departments in CSE offer only one course geared toward non-majors, thus virtually eliminating the possibility of taking more than one course in a prefix. Most students who are majors already take more than one NSC course outside of their major while fulfilling associated requirements.

6. **Allow transfer and exam credit equivalencies for CA, GA, and CSV.**

Rationale: The inability to transfer CA, GA, and CSV equivalencies has the greatest impact on transfer students, who may find themselves in the position of having to take fifteen hours of the Core (CA, GA, CSV, and two WEM) after enrolling at TCU, no matter how many credit hours they bring in. This is an unusually high number and can result in delaying graduation. Because transfer students as a group tend to be more diverse ethnically, racially, economically, and age-wise than non-transfer TCU students, this rule has important DEI implications.

7. **Change the wording of student learning outcomes for each of 14 areas of Core requirements:**

Rationale: The recent SACSCOC reaffirmation process highlighted the need to revise student learning outcomes across the Core Curriculum to be concise, measurable, and to map up to the newly created Competencies for the Core Curriculum. Six faculty committees, made up of approximately 45 faculty members, have worked together on the wording of the following proposed outcomes. AACU Value Rubrics were used in many cases to create outcomes that connect to understandings in the broader field of general education.

Answers to nuts-and-bolts questions you may have:

- Aside from the elimination of the NSC-prefix rule, no change in curricular requirements appears in the proposals above. The Core Curriculum Report recommended only fixes, adjustments, and tweaks rather than a major overhaul, and these proposals respect that mandate.

- With the condensation of several student learning outcomes into one central student learning outcome for each of the fourteen areas, additional guidance to instructors will be provided in the form of skills and criteria for course content and vetting.

- A new, highly visual and easy-to-understand advising tool will be created