

University Core Curriculum in the Liberal Arts (a.k.a. “Old Core”)

Annual Director’s Report

by

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This is my final Annual Director’s Report for the Old Core. Effective May 15, 2015, I am stepping down as Director. On that date, Brendan Foreman will assume the position. I have met with him to coordinate the transition.

My last year as Director coincided with the final first-year class that will be under the Old Core. That first-year class was the last to take the First-Year Seminar (FYS). Since that course is not part of the new Core Curriculum (“New Core”) that begins next fall, it no longer will be offered. This raises the issue of how we should accommodate students under the Old Core who did not successfully complete FYS during the Fall 2014 term. Such students include both those who failed the course and those who transferred to John Carroll during the Spring 2015 term with less than 25 credit hours, the number required to waive FYS. We recognized that issue last fall and offered a trailer section during the Spring 2015 term that captured most of those students. In the quite likely event that there are students who needed to take that trailer section but did not, however, I make two recommendations to the new Director. First, I recommend that the Director agree, via the Academic Petition Form, to an adequate substitution course for any student who failed FYS or transferred to John Carroll with few credit hours. In each case, the student should receive ONLY credit for FYS, NOT any other Core designations that the course happens to carry. Second, in cases of students who transferred to John Carroll short of, but very near, the 25 hours necessary for waiving the course, I recommend that the Director be flexible with the 25-hour requirement and waive FYS unless a particular student is struggling and a substitution course might help that student succeed at John Carroll.

Last year, I reported that, in order to limit the workload of instructors during the phase-out period of the Old Core, the University Core Committee (UCC) decided to discontinue the expiration dates of existing Core designations and all those designations remain in place throughout the remainder of the Old Core. As a result, there were fewer Core Course Approval Petitions submitted to the UCC. Nevertheless, the UCC still received many such petitions for new courses and new designations for existing courses. The UCC adjudicated those petitions in a timely fashion.

I thank the Faculty for approving the recommendation that I made in last year’s report regarding instructors who develop courses for the New Core that also are appropriate for designations in the Old Core. I recommended that we should require instructors to apply only to the New Core committee, and that committee and/or the instructor should inform the Old-Core Director when a new course appears to be appropriate for the Old Core. The Old-Core Director, then, could review the syllabus and approve any appropriate Old-Core designations. Since the Faculty approved this recommendation, instructors will not have the burden of applying to two

different committees for the development of a single course. I believe avoiding that burden is necessary in order not to discourage instructors from making their new courses part of the Old-Core. For the reason I describe in the next paragraph, it is important that we avoid any such discouragement. Moreover, the Faculty's approval will allow the Old-Core Director to adjudicate requests for Old-Core Designations more efficiently. Again, this helps to avoid the discouragement about which I was concerned.

I would like to take this opportunity to remind Faculty, especially Department Chairs and other schedule-makers, that, although the New Core begins next fall, we still need to offer a sufficient number of Old-Core courses until the Fall 2014 first-year class completes its Core Curriculum. Typically, students complete most of the Core during their first and second years, but, my experience with the countless Academic Petitions I have received as Old-Core Director informs me that many students do not complete the Core until their last semester before graduation. We should keep this fact in mind as we construct our schedules for the next few years.

During the summer of 2014, the UCC continued its assessment of English Composition and Writing-Intensive papers. I thank Maria Soriano and the graduate students she recruited for doing the actual work of scoring the papers using a rubric created by UCC. I also thank all those instructors who collected and made available the papers and Natalie Robinson who worked with those instructors. Natalie once again worked with instructors to collect papers during the 2104-15 Academic Year, and Brendan Foreman will work with her and Maria Soriano to see that the assessment is completed again during the summer of 2015. I have informed Brendan that he will need to discuss with the Director of Assessment whether that process should continue next year and beyond.

I would be remiss if I did not take this opportunity to offer Brendan any assistance I can provide once he takes over the Director duties. I also sincerely thank the members of the UCC for their efforts during my two stints as Director and Natalie Robinson for her invaluable administrative assistance.

If you have any questions about the preceding, or other Old-Core matters, please let me know.