

# DRAFT

## REPORT OF THE CORE REVIEW COMMITTEE

FALL 2004

During the month of October, the committee conducted a series of small group meetings with interested faculty. The object of the meetings was to promote discussion and solicit opinions about the purposes and aims of the core curriculum. Participants were asked to examine the statement on the purposes of the core prepared by the 1992 Core Review Committee to determine whether it continued to be an acceptable description of the purposes of the core. Participants were also asked to examine the Undergraduate Educational Aims recently approved by the Academic Senate to determine which of these aims were directly relevant to the core curriculum. They were also to consider whether there were other aims appropriate to the core that had not been identified as Undergraduate Educational Aims.

A total of seventeen small meetings were held, with attendance ranging from two to eleven participants. Each meeting was run by a member of the Core Review Committee, and detailed minutes of the meeting were taken. These minutes were approved by all participants before being distributed to the other members of the Core Review Committee. In all one hundred and thirteen faculty participated, representing twenty-four academic departments.

### Purposes of the Core

The first charge to the Core Review Committee from the Academic Senate was to “articulate or re-articulate the overall purposes of the core.” Contained within the report of the 1992 Core Review Committee is a statement on the purposes of the core that appears to be the most recent articulation. Our committee examined this statement closely, and reached an initial conclusion that, with minor modifications, it would serve as an excellent statement of core purposes.

In order to confirm this judgment the 1992 statement on the Purposes of the Core was included in materials sent to all faculty participating in the small group discussions. Here is the text.

#### **1992 Core Curriculum Purpose**

Education in the liberal arts is central to the mission of Loyola College, and the cornerstone of each student's education is the core curriculum.

Although the College now offers majors in 26 disciplines, all students bring a shared foundation in the liberal arts to their specialized studies as a result of their work in the core program. In addition to serving as a common bond for students, the program represents, on the strength of its continuing commitment to liberal education, the principal source of continuity between the Loyola of today and its past.

Loyola has always been devoted not only to the transmission of knowledge but also to the development of particular qualities of mind and character. The mission of the College is fulfilled only to the degree that it liberates students from

self-absorption, parochial ideas, and unexamined beliefs, replacing these with concern and compassion for others, an appreciation of things past or unfamiliar, and a capacity for critical thought. Although this mission shapes all of the courses and many of the activities at Loyola, it is manifested most clearly in the core curriculum.

The core, as distinguished from vocational or pre-professional training, affords Loyola students an opportunity to develop the sharpness and versatility of mind which have always been the hallmarks of a Jesuit education.

Both long tradition and the needs of contemporary life mandate the ability to communicate effectively and elegantly as a primary goal of liberal education. Therefore, writing plays a central role in the core curriculum.

An important goal of a liberal education is familiarity with the history, the great literature, the central scientific paradigms, the primary philosophical and theological ideas, and the central debates of the Western cultural heritage. Such familiarity, along with the knowledge of a foreign language, helps to set a foundation for examinations of the ideas and mores of other cultures.

A Loyola graduate should be able to think critically and analytically, to reason mathematically, and to understand the methodology of disciplines in both the natural and social sciences. Yet, the unifying objective of the core curriculum extends beyond the provision of fundamental knowledge to the setting of the foundations of intellectual, moral, and spiritual excellence. A liberal education in the Jesuit' tradition seeks, ultimately, to provide a rigorous intellectual basis for the development of moral convictions, and for a life of continuous learning and action in service of those convictions

In general, when faculty were asked about this statement, they expressed approval of its content. There was, however, significant interest in increasing the emphasis on diversity and global perspectives in the statement. There is a clear and explicit focus on the Western cultural heritage, with only a small nod to the ideas and mores of other cultures. Many faculty noted that the world had changed since 1992 and a deeper awareness of cultural diversity was necessary.

Our committee believes that the following alternative wording to paragraph six is appropriate:

[WE NEED TO HAVE A DISCUSSION ABOUT THIS WORDING]

### Undergraduate Educational Aims and the Aims of the Core

The second charge of the Academic Senate to the Core Review Committee was to “develop learning aims for the core curriculum that are related to the Undergraduate Educational Aims passed by the Academic Senate.” We understand this charge to imply two questions. (1) Which of the Undergraduate Educational Aims approved by the Senate are addressed in the core curriculum? The core may have sole responsibility for certain aims, and may share responsibility for others with the major curriculum or with co-curricular and extra-curricular functions of the College. Some aims may simply not be addressed through the core. (2) Are educational goals specific to the core which have not been addressed by the Senate’s list of undergraduate educational aims? If so, what are they and how do they fit with the aims already approved?

To help meet this charge, we asked all participants in our small group discussions to answer the question: “With the Mission Statement, the 1992 Purposes of the Core, and the Undergraduate Educational Aims in mind, what do you perceive as the main purpose(s), role(s), or aim(s) of the Core Curriculum at Loyola College?” The responses to this question and the ensuing discussion enables us to reach conclusions about the overall aims of the core curriculum.

It can be said of the Undergraduate Educational Aims that the first four most explicitly address intellectual matters, while aims five through nine take a broader educational view. There was general agreement expressed by discussion participants that the first three aims were appropriately the concern of the core. This is in no way surprising, since these aims include intellectual excellence, critical understanding, and *eloquentia perfecta*, and therefore lie at the heart of our educational enterprise. Perhaps somewhat surprisingly, the fourth aim, aesthetics, received little attention during group discussions. When we come to an examination of aims five through nine—leadership, faith and mission, promotion of justice, diversity, and wellness—there is less of an overwhelming consensus, and some participants express concern over whether these are appropriate aims for the core (or for the institution generally<sup>1</sup>). This report will examine the discussion of each educational aim in turn, and will offer some conclusions about the relevance of each to the core.

## **THE MORE PURELY INTELLECTUAL AIMS**

### Intellectual excellence

Intellectual excellence is clearly an important educational aim of the core, perhaps the most important aim. It infuses the core (and the intellectual life of the college) in two ways, which are reflected in the different emphases found in the sub-aims. One aspect of this aim is the transformation of students. When we speak of promoting intellectual excellence we are hoping that students will become passionately engaged in the process of learning and that they will develop habits of mind that lead to intellectual excellence--curiosity, intellectual humility, persistence, honesty. We also mean that our students will gain a familiarity and understanding of a discipline (a major) and will come to understand the connection between this discipline and others, appreciating the extent to which knowledge is interconnected.

The core thus has a principal role in the pursuit of this educational goal, and needs to work cooperatively with the major curricula to achieve it.

### Critical Understanding: Thinking, Reading and Analyzing

This educational aim, like intellectual excellence, is clearly and uncontraversially the shared responsibility of the core and the major curricula. In all our discussions, this aim was cited, often in association with the aim of *eloquentia perfecta*. The ability to think, speak, and write logically, coherently, and gracefully is intimately linked to the development of critical skills involving the assessment of data, the critical evaluation of knowledge claims, and the skillful and appropriate employment of problem-solving algorithms.

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<sup>1</sup> The Undergraduate Educational Aims have been approved by the Academic Senate and therefore constitute the educational aims of the College. Our committee treats them as a given and asks which ones are most appropriately the concern of the core. But we note that some concerns were expressed about them.

Under this educational aim, the subsidiary aims identify various critical thinking strategies. For example, the ability to use mathematical concepts and procedures and to evaluate claims made in numeric terms is explicitly singled out, as is the ability to use information technology in research and problem-solving. Discussion within the small groups rarely descended to this level of detail, but it seems reasonable to assume that the enthusiastic endorsement of the overall aim includes implicit approval of the specific sub-aims.

One topic has emerged within the committee which seems to fit as a sub-aim under critical understanding; namely, financial literacy.  
[WE AS A COMMITTEE NEED TO DECIDE WHETHER TO CONSIDER THIS AS AN ADDITIONAL AIM OF THE CORE]

### *Eloquentia Perfecta*

As noted above, it is difficult and probably misleading to separate this goal from the goal of critical thinking. The importance of listening, reading, writing, speaking across the core and the major as an instrument of critical thinking and communication was sounded often and repeatedly in almost every session. There was considerable discussion about whether certain levels of writing and critical thinking skills should be expected as students enter, as they complete the writing requirement, their core requirements, or the full four years of undergraduate education. So while both critical thinking and *eloquentia perfecta* are clearly aims appropriate to the core, it is also clear that these aims are shared responsibilities. [DO WE WANT TO SAY THAT THEY ARE PRIMARILY THE PURVIEW OF THE CORE?]

We note that “competence in a language other than one’s own” is included as a subsidiary aim under *Eloquentia Perfecta*. The learning of foreign languages as a priority of the core was mentioned explicitly only a few times in group discussions, and occasionally questions were raised about its relation to global awareness and about its success. Given that most respondents affirmed the importance of all the aims, the modern language requirement was tacitly embraced. It is unquestionably a core aim.

### Aesthetics

The aim of Aesthetics contains two sub-aims: the appreciation of beauty, both natural and man-made; and a cultivated response to the arts, and the ability to express oneself about aesthetic experience. Interestingly, this aim came up very infrequently in small group discussions, perhaps because faculty assumed that its place in the core had been confirmed by the Fine Arts requirement. Members of the committee have raised the question of whether the aim of aesthetics is present implicitly in much of the faculty discussion. For example, the goal of educating the whole person (clearly expressed in the College’s Mission Statement) would seem to include fostering an appreciation of beauty, as might the sub-aim under Intellectual Excellence of understanding the interconnectedness of all knowledge. The Jesuit call to teach, learn, lead and serve “*ad*

*maiozem Dei gloriam*” also points in this direction, since as Gerard Manley Hopkins has put it: “The world is charged with the grandeur of God.”

## **THE MORE BROADLY EDUCATIONAL AIMS**

[I SUGGEST THIS DIVISION BECAUSE I THINK THE INTERESTING QUESTION FOR THE COMMITTEE IS THE EXTENT TO WHICH THE CORE CURRICULUM ASSUMES RESPONSIBILITY (PRIMARY OR SUBSIDIARY) FOR THESE AIMS.]

### Leadership

The learning aim of leadership is infrequently mentioned by faculty in small group discussions but the subject does come up both directly and indirectly. When it is mentioned directly, it is often in connection with service-learning courses or initiatives, and the relation between leadership and service is highlighted. When it comes up indirectly it is frequently in the context of civic life. There is a strong sense that a Jesuit education involves the development of a sense of responsibility to a larger community, so the aim of leadership cannot be separated from the aim of faith and mission. One of the questions this leads to is whether the core should have a service component.

Some people have suggested that the extent of the core itself works against the aim of leadership. The idea is that the student’s intellectual life is thoroughly prescribed by the core and major, and there is little room for the student to take responsibility for the shape of her education. Alternatively, one can argue that many of the aims of the core most frequently cited look to intellectual habits and skills that are necessary for effective leadership; e.g., effective communication, focus on others, freedom from parochial thinking.

### Faith and Mission

The Jesuit mission of the College is spoken of consistently but there is little sense that it is part of the courses in the curriculum. It is difficult to point to a place where it is given forthright emphasis. At the same time, there appears to be a general consensus that the core curriculum is central to Jesuit education. We speak of the “main purpose” of the core in terms that are drawn from this mission--commitment to others, intellectual basis for moral convictions, imaginative recreation of another’s perspective and place, attention to the Sacred. Some faculty have noted that Alpha courses are explicitly designed to spend time addressing mission, and to make use of the Examen.

As we move forward, this particular aim may require sustained attention. One participant expressed the problem this way: “I know there is the general vision of justice, etc., but do we have a more specific vision? Do we want students to come to know the love of God?”

### Promotion of Justice

The educational aim of promoting justice seems closely tied to the discussion of Jesuit mission. The goals of making “men and women for others”, of producing good people and good citizens, of developing deep moral convictions are at the heart of Jesuit education. In the small discussion groups, social justice is often explicitly mentioned, as is the cultivation of an attitude that puts others concerns before one’s own. The core is believed to address Jesuit values and traditions, and the promotion of justice has a prominent place in the Jesuit tradition. Reference is made to Fr. Kolvenbach’s speech at Santa Clara University where he links a commitment to faith and justice to the essential character of a Jesuit university. His comments that: “When the heart is touched by direct experience, the mind may be challenged to change. Personal involvement with innocent suffering, with the injustice others suffer, is the catalyst for solidarity, which then gives rise to intellectual inquiry and moral reflection.” This may suggest an essential role for service learning in the core, a role that was also suggested in the discussion of leadership.

### Diversity

Diversity receives strong support from the faculty as an educational aim. We have already noted that the 1992 statement on the purposes of the core needs a stronger and more explicit reference to diversity. The recent passage of the diversity requirement (which also looks to the aim of justice) gives evidence of an institutional commitment to this as an aim for the core and for the curriculum as a whole. Some have suggested that it needs to be considered as a core course to validate it with the same value as other core courses.

Faculty note the paucity of knowledge students have of other cultures and traditions, and also frequently observe that the current curriculum continues to maintain the primacy of the Western cultural heritage.

### Wellness

The aim of wellness seems to generate the least enthusiasm and support from faculty. The committee notes the small number of academic departments endorsing the specific subordinate aims as appropriate to their departmental work. There was a similar lack of enthusiasm evident during the group discussions. Several faculty thought that teaching wellness was problematic. While it does not seem that faculty are opposed to the wellness aim *per se*, they appear to see it as something that should be addressed by non-academic departments, e.g., Student Development.

The committee has wondered about the relation of this aim both to the overall College mission of educating the whole person, and to certain more specific aims like justice or faith and mission.

[IT MIGHT BE USEFUL TO CHECK OFF THE NINE UNDERGRADUATE EDUCATIONAL AIMS WITH THEIR SUBORDINATES AS APPROPRIATE TO THE CORE OR NOT. I’VE MADE SOME SUGGESTIONS, BUT I THINK THIS IS SOMETHING WE NEED TO SPEND SOME TIME WITH.]

<b>Intellectual Excellence</b>	
appreciation of and passion for intellectual endeavor and the life of the mind	YES
appreciation of and grounding in the liberal arts and sciences	YES
excellence in a discipline, including understanding of the relation between one's discipline and other disciplines; understanding the interconnectedness of all knowledge	PART
habits of intellectual curiosity, honesty, humility, and persistence	YES
<b>Critical Understanding: Thinking, Reading and Analyzing</b>	
the ability to evaluate a claim based on documentation, plausibility, and logical coherence	YES
the ability to analyze and solve problems using appropriate tools	YES
the ability to make sound judgments in complex and changing environments	YES
freedom from narrow, solipsistic, or parochial thinking	YES
the ability to use mathematical concepts and procedures competently, and to evaluate claims made in numeric terms	YES
the ability to find and assess data about a given topic using general repositories of information, both printed and electronic	YES
the ability to use information technology in research and problem-solving, with an appreciation of its advantages and limitations	YES
<b>Eloquentia Perfecta</b>	
the ability to use speech and writing effectively, logically, gracefully, persuasively, and responsibly	YES
critical understanding of and competence in a broad range of communications media	YES
competence in a language other than one's own	YES
<b>Aesthetics</b>	
an appreciation of beauty, both natural and man-made	???
a cultivated response to the arts, and the ability to express oneself about aesthetic experience	YES
<b>Leadership</b>	
an understanding of one's strengths and capabilities as a leader and the responsibility one has to use leadership strengths for the common good	???
a willingness to act as an agent for positive change, informed by a sense of responsibility to the larger community	???
<b>Faith and Mission</b>	
an understanding of the mission of the Catholic university as an institution dedicated to exploring the intersection of faith and reason, and experience and competence in exploring that intersection	YES
an understanding of the mission of the Society of Jesus and of the Religious Sisters of Mercy, especially of what it means to teach, learn, lead, and serve "for the greater glory of God"	YES
a habit of thoughtful, prayerful, and responsible discernment of the voice of God in daily life; a mature faith	???
habits of reflection in solitude and in community	???

a commitment to put faith into action	???
<b>Promotion of Justice</b>	
an appreciation of the great moral issues of our time: the sanctity of human life, poverty, racism, genocide, war and peace, religious tolerance and intolerance, the defense of human rights, and the environmental impact of human activity	YES
commitment to promote justice for all, based on a respect for the dignity and sanctity of human life	???
commitment to and solidarity with persons who are materially poor or otherwise disadvantaged	???
<b>Diversity</b>	
recognition of the inherent value and dignity of each person, and therefore an awareness of, sensitivity toward, and respect for the differences of race, gender, ethnicity, national origin, culture, sexual orientation, religion, age, and disabilities	YES
awareness of the structural sources, consequences, and responsibilities of privilege	YES
awareness of the global context of citizenship and informed sensitivity to the experiences of peoples outside the United States	YES
awareness of the multiplicity of perspectives that bear on the human experience, and the importance of historical, global and cultural context in determining the way we see the world	YES
<b>Wellness</b>	
attentiveness to development of the whole person--mind, body, and spirit	???
ability to balance and integrate care for self and care for others	???
understanding the importance of productive and responsible use of leisure time	???
freedom from addictive behaviors	???