

Arts and Science Ad-hoc Core Curriculum Committee

Option #1: Incremental Adjustment

Plan: Under this option, the A+S Core Curriculum Committee would work within the framework of the current Core Curriculum. The committee will seek to determine specific problems that have emerged in the process of implementing the new core and suggest appropriate remedies. For example, the committee might seek to define more precisely the boundaries of distributional categories or suggest a clearer set of criteria to determine which courses belong in the core. The committee might also draft a set of guidelines for periodic review of the core curriculum and consider appropriate standards and methods of assessment.

Rationale: In spring 2007, after an arduous process of discussion and negotiation, the faculty of A+S voted by a two-thirds majority to adopt the current core curriculum. More recently a set of separate requirements for a Bachelor of Science core were approved. These votes constitute a fundamental commitment to a distributional model of general education that should not be taken lightly. The new core went into effect in fall 2008 and at the present time only applies to the current freshman and sophomore classes. Given that half of our undergraduates do not even fall under the new core, it is far too early to pass judgment as to its efficacy. Overturning the new core at the present time and replacing it with a different set of requirements would cause enormous confusion among students, administrators and academic advisors who, in all likelihood, would have to juggle three separate cores simultaneously. The change would cause painful disruption to departments and programs many of which have adjusted their curricula specifically to accommodate the new requirements. Finally, changing the core would place the college faculty in the awkward position of overturning its own clearly stated will and opening a process that can only be contentious, divisive and detrimental to the spirit of collegiality.

Thus is not to say that the new core is flawless and should not be subject to adjustment. But replacing the core should be the last, not the first resort. A very strong and detailed case must be made as to why the current core is fatally flawed and every possible remedy much be considered before a new set of requirements are instituted. Toward that end, this plan proposes to identify specific problems that have arisen as the current core has been put into effect and look for ways in which they might be addressed without overturning the structure currently in place. This would include creating a mechanism for regular review of the core so that subsequent problems could also be corrected. Only in the event that these efforts come to a standstill should a new core be considered.