



UNIVERSITY OF NOTRE DAME
OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT

Rev. John I. Jenkins, C.S.C.
President

August 25, 2014

Dear Colleagues:

We write to invite the faculty of the University to join in a campus-wide conversation about our core curriculum or general education requirements. To lead the process of reviewing these requirements and deliberating on possible changes to the curriculum, we have formed the Decennial Core Curriculum Review Committee that will be chaired by Greg Crawford, dean of the College of Science, and John McGreevy, dean of the College of Arts and Letters. We are grateful to them and the following colleagues for agreeing to serve as committee members:

- Kasey Buckles, Economics
- Michael Hildreth, Physics
- Peter Holland, Film, Television, and Theatre
- Tim Matovina, Theology
- Leo McWilliams, Engineering
- Mark Roche, German and Russian Languages and Literatures
- Katherine Spiess, Finance
- John Stamper, Architecture
- Michelle Whaley, Biological Sciences
- Rebecca Wingert, Biological Sciences
- Rev. Hugh Page, Africana Studies and Theology, *ex officio*
- Rev. Robert Sullivan, History, *ex officio*

In addition, Mr. David Bailey and the members of the Office of Institutional Research will serve as staff to the committee, helping it with its data gathering, research, report preparation, and in any other ways the committee would find helpful.

We have asked the committee to consult as widely as possible during this academic year, given the many students, faculty, programs, and departments directly involved in general education requirements. This committee is also charged with forming a number of subcommittees to help address specific issues related to the core curriculum.

Our shared task as a faculty is a significant one. Every ten years, Notre Dame reviews its core curriculum requirements precisely because these requirements signify and determine, to the best of our ability, the knowledge, dispositions, and skills every Notre Dame undergraduate student should possess upon graduation. Along with major requirements, research experiences, co- and extra-curricular activities, and residential life, the core curriculum is a critical element in enabling Notre Dame, as one of the world's leading Catholic research universities, to "offer an unsurpassed undergraduate education that nurtures the formation of mind, body, and spirit."

Every core curriculum committee confronts an altered educational landscape and this committee is no different. An incomplete list of notable changes since the University's last review might include the enhanced capacity of our undergraduate students as suggested by their high school grades, advanced placement examinations, and standardized tests; a welcome increase in the diversity of our undergraduate student population, from both within and beyond the United States; more widespread use of new pedagogical techniques, some incorporating online resources; changes in the religious formation of our students before their arrival at Notre Dame; and an accelerated pace of globalization and contact with societies and cultures once thought distant from our own.

Much good work has already been accomplished. In 2011, the Academic Council approved a set of learning goals for undergraduate education (see <http://provost.nd.edu/undergraduate-education/university-learning-outcomes-for-undergraduates/>). Last year, we convened a preliminary committee chaired by Rev. Robert Sullivan and reporting through Associate Provost Hugh Page (both of whom will serve as a resource to the committee as ex officio members), which included faculty members from across the University. They examined possible options for curricular reform and gathered data on curricular structures at other universities, particularly those which have recently undergone similar curricular reviews.

We anticipate that the committee will be wide ranging in its assessment and recommendations. In particular, we have asked committee members to address the following five questions:

1. What knowledge, dispositions, and skills should all Notre Dame students possess upon graduation?
2. How best can these be instantiated in core curriculum requirements, and what set of organizational structures—from academic advising to the relationship between the First Year of Studies and the Colleges and Schools—best facilitate their acquisition by students?
3. How can our core curriculum not only sustain but also deepen our commitment to Notre Dame's Catholic character?
4. What, if any, relationship should exist between core curriculum requirements and advanced placement examinations?
5. How do and should core curriculum requirements work in conjunction with academic major requirements?

We are asking the committee members to complete their work as efficiently as possible, but recognize that their charge requires considerable faculty consultation and thoughtful deliberation. If they are not finished with their work by the beginning of the 2015-16 academic year, we have asked them for a draft report by that date. We anticipate that during the 2015-16 academic year, we will begin and complete the process of having the committee's final report and recommendations considered by and voted upon by the Academic Council.

We encourage all faculty members to assist the committee—and our common enterprise—by participating in the evaluation of the core curriculum through the processes developed by the committee, and in this manner, helping us develop the strongest possible core curriculum for the decade ahead. Thank you and the committee members, in advance, for your efforts on this important responsibility and opportunity.

Yours in Notre Dame,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "John I. Jenkins".

Rev. John I. Jenkins, C.S.C.
President

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Thomas G. Burish".

Thomas G. Burish
Provost