

# Meeting of the Villanova University Academic Policy Committee

Friday, April 22, 2016  
Mendel Science Center, room 103  
11:00 am – 12:30 pm

## MINUTES

Present: Sherry Burrell, Danai Chasaki, Mark Doorley, Taylor Grosjean, Marylu Hill, Christopher Kilby, Wen Mao, John Olson, Joseph Orkwiszewski, Christine Palus, Paul Pasles, Lesley Perry, Louise Russo (chair), Nancy Sharts-Hopko, Joshua Thomas, Ariel Thompson, Randy Weinstein, Craig Wheeland, Catherine Warrick, Joyce Willens, Dennis Wykoff

Not in Attendance: Wayne Bremser (NIA), Jerusha Conner, Alice Dailey (NIA), Caitlin Florin, Paul Hanouna (NIA), Ken Kroos, Michael Lamb, Wenhong Luo, Susan Mackey-Kallis (NIA), Jutta Seibert, Rodrigo Rivero, Bobby Roenitz, Kelly Welch (NIA)

The meeting was called to order at 11:00 am

- I. The chair welcomed newly elected APC members and invited guests to the final meeting of the 2015-2016 academic year. The agenda for the meeting included the review of two sub-committee reports (Online CATS and Core Curriculum) and a newly modified Class Attendance Policy provided by the Provost's Office for APC feedback. All three of these documents were distributed to APC members, current and newly elected in advance of the meeting to facilitate discussion. The chair thanked all APC members and those invited as non-APC representatives who worked on the three major sub-committees over the past year.
- II. The chair provided a brief update on the work of the adjunct faculty evaluation sub-committee. A brief survey was prepared by Kathy Nazar in OPIR and distributed to department chairs and academic program directors in early April. Responses were received over a two week window and collated. The chair will meet with Kathy to review her report and the final results will be distributed to sub-committee members for continuing work in the next academic year.
- III. Paul Pasles, chair of the Online CATS sub-committee, presented the final report. OPIR representatives Paul Bonfanti and Jim Trainer joined the meeting to discuss the work of the committee and receive feedback from APC membership. Highlights of the sub-committee report and presentation include the following:
  - a. OPIR is developing a hybrid model for administration of CATS online that will enable faculty to schedule class time for evaluation completion. Students will be provided a log-in code via email.
  - b. Faculty will be able to alert students that time will be dedicated on a specific day for evaluation administration and will be encouraged to bring along or use an appropriate electronic device for CATS completion in class. This should ensure significant participation in-line with the history of paper CATS usage.

- c. The CATS log-in code will be valid for a minimum two week interval leading into the last week of classes.
- d. The CATS availability window is limited to a time frame that is similar to what is currently provided for use of paper CATS.
- e. CATS results will be, by default, set at available (public) to students with NOVASIS credentials and faculty will have the option to change that designation to private (unavailable). At other institutions with fully online CATS, access to available evaluation information does contribute to a more robust response rate.
- f. Right now there is no penalty plan in place to incentivize participation, such as early release of grades to students who complete CATS by the deadline.
- g. There will be a pilot of a small number of courses in fall 2016 (perhaps ~10%) to test the infrastructure and provide information on response rates and instructor feedback before a full transition plan is developed.

APC member feedback and discussion included the following:

- a. Faculty may wish to have summer course CATS data and so there should be an option to request inclusion of these courses
- b. An incentive for early grade access may be a valuable aide in encouraging student CATS completion however, withholding grade information may affect the timing of a student's awareness of their academic standing and thus relevant curriculum-related decision making. Interestingly Jim Trainer noted that at institutions where evaluations are already fully online, participation level of seniors falls in spring by ~5% because the school cannot be hindered in graduation certification by a delayed release of information.

Paul Pasles completed modest edits to the report following full APC discussion at the meeting. The edited and final version of the report is appended.

- IV. Craig Wheeland, Vice Provost for Academics, presented for discussion a newly modified version of the Class Attendance Policy. Recent edits were completed for clarity, to create specific connections to other institutional policies, and specify inquiry processes for both faculty and students if there is an issue related to a student's attendance. Highlights of the policy include the following:
- a. Attendance policy issues/decisions start with the Associate Dean as opposed to Department Chairpersons.
  - b. Faculty cannot request illness-related documentation however, an Associate Dean may collect information from all relevant sources and share it with faculty in order to clarify an attendance-related decision/student inquiry.
  - c. The list of illnesses or reasons for excused absences included in the policy may be too wide open and thus affect the integrity of the course. Some colleges may want the list to be more limited as this will provide flexibility in decision making. The contrary viewpoint was that a more defined list provides important protection to particular groups of students such as athletes.

Craig Wheeland completed modest edits to the Attendance Policy following full APC discussion at the meeting. The edited and final version of the Policy that will be rolled

out in fall 2016 is appended. Areas highlighted were content areas where edits were made per APC feedback.

Time ran out before the APC could discuss the University Core Curriculum Subcommittee Report. That document is attached as part of the record of the work of the APC over the past year. This document and any new initiatives by the Provost's Office related to the University Core will be incorporated into the work of the newly elected APC of the 2016-2018 congress.

The meeting was adjourned at 12:30 pm

Respectfully submitted,  
Louise Russo

Members of APC: Wayne Bremser, Danai Chasaki, Jerusha Conner, Alice Dailey, Mark Doorley, Caitlin Florin (student representative), Pat Maggitti (represented by Craig Wheeland), Louise Fitzpatrick (represented by Lesley Perry), Gary Gabriele (represented by Randy Weinstein), Taylor Grosjean (student representative), Paul Hanouna, Ken Kroos, Michael Lamb (student representative), Adele Lindenmeyr (represented by Joseph Orkwiszewski), Susan Mackey-Kallis, Wenhong Luo, John Olson, Christine Palus, Paul Pasles, Rodrigo Rivero (student representative), Bobby Roenitz (student representative), Louise Russo (chair), Jutta Seibert, Nancy Sharts-Hopko, Joshua Thomas (grad student representative), Ariel Thompson (student representative), Catherine Warrick, Fayette Veverka, Kelly Welch, Joyce S. Willens, Daniel Wright (represented by Wen Mao)

# Report of the Online CATS subcommittee of the APC

Revised April 22, 2016

## Background

Villanova plans to convert the Course and Teacher Survey (CATS) to an online format. Currently, surveys are administered in paper form, with the exception of online courses. Ultimately, the goal is to have all CATS evaluations submitted in purely electronic form for both online and traditional courses. In Fall 2015, the Academic Policy Committee formed a subcommittee to work with OPIR in planning the rollout of online CATS for all undergraduate and graduate courses.

Representatives of UNIT and OPIR have met many times already in order to discuss the technical challenges involved in this transition. Those discussions are ongoing. Thus our own focus is on policy issues, not technical issues. The subcommittee met four times during the current academic year, and regular updates were presented at APC meetings.

## Recommendations of the subcommittee

1. **IN CLASS OR OUT?** Our initial discussions considered two possibilities: continuing to administer surveys in class, albeit on laptop or other device, vs. having students complete surveys outside of class. The latter option drew objections from some faculty because of a perceived risk that students might work together on their evaluations, which could introduce some systematic bias into the results. The former option has its own risks, for example: students now work on a variety of devices and platforms, so in the likely event that a technical glitch interferes with a student completing surveys during the class period, they are effectively disenfranchised from the process.

Luckily, there is a third way: the hybrid model. During some fixed window at the end of the semester (currently that window is 2 weeks long), the instructor picks a class meeting in which class time will be devoted to the CATS process. That's what already happens with paper CATS; however, with paperless surveys, the instructor must now announce the date in advance so that students bring their laptop (or phone or tablet) on the designated day. Students can log in on their devices and complete the surveys during that time. The instructor strongly encourages them to do so (before leaving the room, of course), and 20 minutes of class time will be made available for this process. A designated student volunteer administers the surveys, providing login instructions to the class. If any student is unable to complete a survey at this time, then they may log in at any other time during the 2-week window. They may only log in once; there is no option for going back and revising one's answers.

**The subcommittee recommends this hybrid model.** By encouraging students to participate in the process on a particular class day, we expect that the response rate

will benefit. The aforementioned objections to an either-or format (in class or out of class) are addressed by the hybrid approach.

In practice, this means that students will receive an email from UNIT at the start of the 2-week window, with instructions on how to logon and take the CATS. They will also receive a second email from UNIT as a reminder, several days before the window closes.

2. **TIME WINDOW.** Paper CATS forms are distributed in advance of the final two weeks of classes. They are supposed to be administered during that two-week window. **We recommend that the 2-week window continue for now.** Following a one- or two-semester pilot testing period which begins in Fall 2016, it might be possible to reduce that window to 10 days, as has occurred at other universities.
  
3. **PERSONAL DATA VISIBLE.** The paper survey form asks for the following six items of personal data: college, class year, FT/PT status, gender, GPA, elective/required, and hours/week spent doing work. (See below.) The individual paper forms are returned to the instructor, and so it is possible to compare answers to the questions about the course itself with the personal data of the students. This can be quite useful. For example, it might turn out that the students who gave the lowest scores for “makes the goals of the course clear” happen to be freshmen. An instructor might adapt their future teaching in order to account for such a result.

1. In which college are you enrolled? . . . . .	C & F ① Engineering ② Liberal Arts & Sciences - Arts ③ Liberal Arts & Sciences - Sciences ④ Nursing ⑤	5. What is your overall cumulative GPA? . . . . .	3.50 - 4.00 ① 3.00 - 3.49 ② 2.50 - 2.99 ③ 2.00 - 2.49 ④ Less than 2.00 ⑤
2. What is your class level? . . .	First Year/Freshman ① Sophomore ② Junior ③ Senior ④ Graduate Student ⑤ Other ⑥	6. Which best describes why you are taking this course? . . . . .	Free Elective ① Elective in my Major or College ② Required Course ③
3. On what basis do you attend Villanova? . . . . .	① Full-Time ② Part-Time	7. How many hours a week outside of class did you spend doing work for this course? . . . . .	Less than 3 hours ① 3-4 hours ② 5-6 hours ③ 7-8 hours ④ 9 or more hours ⑤
4. What is your gender? . . . . .	① Female ② Male		

With online CATS, personal data for each individual is already available in the system, so there is no need for students to complete those questions (with the possible exception of “required/elective”). It should still be possible for faculty to view analyses of questions #7-29 with respect to personal data variables (#1-6), as long as the requested samples are not so small as to make individual results visible.

Note that the open-ended comments at the end of the survey will now truly be anonymous, since they will no longer be handwritten. That guarantee of anonymity should increase confidence in the integrity of the process, and encourage students to give accurate and honest answers. OPIR will still be able to perform analyses, but individual forms will not be available to faculty.

4. **FREQUENCY OF EVALUATIONS.** Currently, with a few exceptions, every section of every course is evaluated, every single semester. There was some discussion as to whether this practice should change. Tenure-track faculty need student evaluation data to include on their annual/triennial faculty evaluations, for three-year review, and on tenure applications. Likewise, CNT/FTNTT faculty are evaluated on a regular basis and need that same data. Thus, those populations must continue to do CATS. However, it might be appropriate for tenured individuals—especially those who teach the same course repeatedly—to participate in the student evaluation process every other semester. (This would require another layer of programming to be able to decide automatically who is evaluated and who is not, in a given semester.)

Nevertheless, the subcommittee feels that the only arguments for this change are weak: that it would save paper (which will no longer be a concern!) or for the convenience of the instructor. Outweighing this are two concerns. One is that continuing to develop one's teaching skills is a lifelong process, and regular student feedback is an important facet of that development. The other issue, which was raised by two student representatives, is that students feel it is important for their voices to be heard. Thus we recommend that, independent of the transition to online surveys, Villanova should stay the course: **continue to survey every section of every course, every semester.**

**N.B.** An exception could be made (at the department level) for courses in which one instructor delivers a lecture and multiple assistants conduct recitations. In such cases, students have to fill out the same form multiple times. A decision could be made at the department level to neglect to evaluate individual recitations. This is not a new policy; OPIR would allow that exception now, but departments are not currently choosing that option. (Each department chair has the final say on this decision.)

5. **SURVEY RESULTS AVAILABLE TO STUDENTS.** Currently, CATS results are private by default, and they only become publicly available if the instructor changes the setting for that class result from “public” to “private.” Of course the decision should still be left to the instructor's discretion, but this committee recommends **changing the default setting to make results available to students unless the instructor changes it** to private.

What motivates this recommendation, and how is it relevant to the online rollout? The major challenge in online course evaluations—whether in Villanova's current online courses or at peer institutions that have made a complete transition to online surveys—is maintaining a high response rate. The problem is bigger than you might imagine. Whereas paper CATS currently have a response rate of around 85-90%, our online surveys so far average only around a 45-50% response rate. That is in line with what happens at other colleges. It doesn't take a statistician to see that systematic bias may be an issue going forward. We need to do whatever we can to promote participation in the process. The hybrid approach mentioned above should help, as instructors encourage students to make use of the in-class opportunity to fill out

surveys. At Notre Dame and elsewhere, it was found that there are other ways to encourage additional participation with student incentives. Frequent email reminders are one such incentive. Another involves student access to past surveys: allow the student to view past survey results for a course they are registering for, if the student completed CATS for their own courses the previous semester. This has been a successful enticement at other schools, but it can only work if the proportion of publicly available surveys is higher than its current infinitesimal rate of < 20%. With so few reviews posted on Novasis, students have no choice but to base their course selection on unsanctioned online sources that rely on self-selected samples. It would be helpful for them to have access to a more comprehensive sample of reviews.

6. **MISCELLANEOUS ISSUES.** For the immediate future, the survey questions should be kept the same. That will allow us to look back a year from now and study retrospectively the impact of going online, without introducing major changes that would confound the analysis.

Supplemental questions will still be allowed, as they are on the current CATS form.

Most distance learning courses at Villanova are currently evaluated using the same survey questions as the in-class paper survey, but with 5 additional questions pertaining to the technology of distance learning. Courses in the online Nursing, MPA, MBA, and CPS programs use a different survey. Those questions will continue to be used for those programs.

We have already mentioned two ways of incentivizing student participation. A third option is “grade hold”: students who complete CATS for all courses are permitted to see their grades a week earlier than the general release date. At Notre Dame, these incentives have raised the response rate to 75-80%. We recommend that this incentive be used here as well, if possible. Further study of the academic calendar is needed to see whether grade hold can be implemented without interfering with timely decisions on students’ academic standing.

Respectfully submitted by Paul Pasles, subcommittee chair

### **Members of the subcommittee**

Paul Bonfanti (OPIR)

Danai Chasaki (COE faculty)

Caitlin Florin (NUR student)

Nurit Friedman (OPIR)

Michael Lamb (VSB student)

Gerard Olson (VSB faculty)

Paul Pasles, chair (CLAS faculty)

Louise Russo (CLAS faculty, APC chair, ex officio)

Liesel Schwarz (Sustainability)

Ariel Thompson (COE student)

James Trainer (OPIR faculty)

Farid Zamani (CLAS faculty)

Submitted to the Academic Policy Committee  
22 April 2016

## CLASS ATTENDANCE

Class and laboratory attendance for first year students is mandatory. A first-year student will receive a grade of "Y" (failure) whenever the number of unexcused absences in a course exceeds twice the number of weekly class meetings for the course.

For students beyond the first year, attendance policies are determined by the instructors of the various courses. The instructor's class attendance policy must appear in the syllabus and at a minimum must allow for the University's excused absences listed below. Enforcement of such attendance policies lies with those instructors. If the instructor thinks a student has too many absences (total of excused and unexcused), then the instructor should discuss the student's attendance with the appropriate Assistant or Associate Dean of the instructor's college in order to determine if additional absences should be excused or unexcused.

Where possible, students should inform their instructors if they plan to be late or absent from class. In all cases, students should be prepared to provide documentation for absences to the appropriate Assistant or Associate Dean of their college. Excused absences allow the student to make up tests and do not count toward a failure in the course for first year students. Absence from class does not release the student from work assigned.

The University's list of excused absences for all students includes the following:

- participation in NCAA athletic competitions
- participation in special academic events (e.g., conferences, field trips, project competitions, etc.)
- participation in official university business (e.g., student representatives attending meetings related to university governance or advancement)
- attendance at significant events involving the immediate family (e.g., may include funerals, weddings and religious holidays - see the University's policy on *Religious Holidays*)
- college-approved participation in placement activities (e.g., job interviews, graduate school interviews, attending job fairs, etc.)
- documented serious illness or disability (see below how to document)

If instructors want to verify that the absence qualifies as a university approved absence, or verify that the student is permitted to participate in the activity, they should contact the designated Assistant or Associate Dean of the student's College.

The College of Professional Studies has separate attendance policies for FastForward courses and the online degree programs.

### Documenting a Serious Illness or Disability

The Student Health Center does not provide notes to excuse absences for students missing class due to their visit to the Student Health Center, or to excuse class absences due to most common illnesses. The Student Health Center will also not provide notes to excuse absences for medical conditions which were not treated at the health center. The purpose of this policy is to eliminate unnecessary visits from students whose sole purpose is obtaining class absence notes for their professors.



Some illnesses may legitimately prevent a student from attending classes, but are not serious enough to require evaluation and treatment from the Student Health Center. Students often provide self-care, which is very appropriate for many common illnesses such as cold, viral infection, or uncomplicated flu. Students should inform their instructors if they are missing class for a common illness. Instructors have the discretion to decide if the absence due to a common illness is excused. If a student wishes to appeal the instructor's decision, the student may do so by contacting the instructor's Department Chair or Program Director, who will consult with the appropriate Assistant or Associate Dean of the instructor's college, before deciding the outcome of the appeal.

If in the judgment of the Student Health Center staff, the student will be out of class due to a serious illness or medical condition, as opposed to a common illness, the Student Health Center staff will contact the appropriate Assistant or Associate Dean, who will then contact the instructor. The Student Health Center communication to the Assistant or Associate Dean will serve as the documentation needed by the Dean (see below). If the student is seeing an off-campus health care provider, the student will provide the documentation from that provider to the appropriate Assistant or Associate Dean, who will then contact the faculty member.

Examples of serious illnesses may include (but are not limited to):

- Mononucleosis, which may require bed rest and/or removal from campus
- Hospitalization and/or surgery
- Highly contagious diseases (e.g., chicken pox, measles)

Mental Health Concerns. The University Counseling Center will use clinical judgment as to whether there is a legitimate need for the student to miss class for reasons related to mental health. If in the judgment of the University Counseling Center staff, the student should be out of class due to a mental health condition, the Counseling Center staff will request a written release of information from the student. With a signed release, the Counseling Center staff may then contact the faculty member or the appropriate Assistant or Associate Dean, who may contact faculty accordingly. The University Counseling Center will not typically validate the legitimacy of a student having missed classes for mental health reasons retroactively, before the student has been to the Counseling Center. The fact that a student is in treatment at the Counseling Center or with an off campus mental health provider will not, in itself, justify the student missing classes. The recommendation for missing classes will occur only when the mental condition necessitates it. If the student is seeing an off-campus mental health care provider, the student will provide the documentation from that provider to the appropriate Assistant or Associate Dean, who will then contact the faculty member.

If the duration of the absence due to serious medical illness or mental health concern undermines the student's ability to complete the academic work required, the appropriate Assistant or Associate Dean will encourage the student to pursue a Medical Leave of Absence – see policy on *Medical Leaves of Absence*.

Documenting Disabilities. Faculty should receive accommodation letters from students impacted by attendance issues as a result of their disability who are registered with Learning Support Services (LSS) or the Office of Disability Services (ODS). Students who are newly struggling should be encouraged to register with the appropriate office for any future concerns. Accommodations are not typically retroactive.

Students with learning disabilities, other neurologically-based disorders, and those disabled by chronic illnesses are encouraged to contact Learning Support Services (LSS). Students with

physical disabilities, including but not limited to visual impairments, hearing loss, and mobility limitations, are encouraged to contact the [Office of Disability Services](#) (ODS). Depending on the type of disability, there are different processes for disclosing and documenting the disability with the University.

- For students with learning disabilities, neurologically-based disorders, and disability due to chronic illness, these guidelines, as well as certification forms for certain specific disabilities, can be found [here](#).
- For students with physical disabilities, these guidelines can be found [here](#).

Provost 5/10/2016

DRAFT

## **Academic Policy Committee University Core Curriculum Sub-Committee Report**

The University Core Curriculum Sub-Committee was created in fall 2014 as a working group in response to a request from the VPAA Office for the APC to create a name for the current core. Louise Russo, APC chair, asked if the work could more broadly include a study of the actual core and development of a proposal to define a de jure core that may, or may not, mirror the current de facto University Core Curriculum (UCC). This expanded charge was approved by the VPAA. The APC Chair solicited volunteers to serve on the sub-committee from current APC, Faculty Congress members, and each of the college deans to assure that deliberations would encompass all viewpoints. The initial group constituted in fall 2014 included:

- Louise Russo, Chair, APC Chair, CLAS representative
- Robert Styer, University Senate Chair, CLAS representative
- Mark Doorley, APC CLAS representative
- Randy Weinstein, COE APC Dean's representative
- Lesley Perry, CON APC Dean's representative
- Melinda German, VSB Dean's designate

As the group moved forward with deliberations focused on the structure of the UCC, the following faculty members were invited to join the sub-committee in fall 2015 for the purpose of advice and illumination related to particular courses that are, at present, part of the de facto core, and to include the new College of Professional Studies:

- Marylu Hill, Director ACS Program
- Mark Graham, Department of Theology
- Sally Scholz, Department of Philosophy
- Sandra Kearney, CPS representative

This report is a summary of the work the sub-committee completed in a series of meetings over the past year and a half in which the current structure of the UCC was discussed and a plan to align the curriculum with newly defined *Institutional Student Learning Goals* was developed. Supportive materials shared by sub-committee members during deliberations and appended to this report include the following:

- Institutional Student Learning Goals
- CON Undergraduate Program Outcomes
- VSB Undergraduate Program Goals
- COE Mission and Learning Objectives
- Common Learning Goals for Foundational Courses in CLAS Core Curriculum
- ACS First Year Experience Goals and The Essentials of Teaching ACS

The sub-committee also referred to a 2007 *Report of the Committee to Review a University Core Curriculum* produced by a large working group of faculty and administrators in response to a charge by the VPAA Office “to determine whether there should be a “real” universal core curriculum, how large it should be, and what its purpose and general direction ought to be.” That report is not included as an addendum to the current document, however it is noted that this report did provide detailed recommendations for creation of a new UCC that were not subsequently instituted.

**Executive Summary of Committee Deliberations:**

- All colleges/schools are committed to an educational foundation in liberal arts and the Augustinian tradition;
- All students currently take ACS 1000, ACS 1001, and THL 1000 which comprise the de facto UCC;
- At present each college/school controls their entire curriculum (specifying what courses meet a degree requirement) and, while there is some core course overlap between colleges, the university does not have a de jure UCC that mandates specific course inclusion in the educational experience of students across all colleges;
- The ACS course sequence (through its predecessor CHS) was developed for CLAS and was soon thereafter adopted as curricular requirements by all colleges/schools THL 1000 (or its predecessors) has, to our knowledge, always been required by all colleges/schools;
- ACS 1000, ACS 1001, and THL 1000 remain a part of CLAS (content, budget, scheduling, reporting structure, etc);
- ACS 1000, ACS 1001 and THL 1000 have changed over the years and are now part of the foundation course sequence in CLAS that includes ACS 1000, ACS 1001, THL 1000, PHI 1000 and ETH 2050. These five courses have been designed with a common syllabus template and have a natural progression in student learning development. PHI 1000 or ETH 2050 are not required by all colleges as a component of their core curriculum;
- Beyond the three courses currently required for all undergraduate students, there are also “topics” that are commonly addressed within all colleges/schools however, specific courses are not identified:
  - Mathematics
  - Science
  - Upper level THL
  - Ethics (not the discipline, but as a topic)
  - Social Science
- New *Institutional Student Learning Goals* have recently been approved and content in ACS 1000, ACC 1001, and THL 1000 has been mapped to these goals;
- There has never been a university-wide examination of the *Institutional Student Learning Goals* or the creation of a de jure UCC. Most programs and departments are unaware of the newly drafted learning goals as they have not been well publicized or disseminated to date;
- Creation of a de jure UCC provides both opportunities and challenges for the institution. The committee shares suggestions for consideration by the Provost Office.

**PART ONE****A. The Current De Facto University Core Curriculum**

The current de facto UCC includes three courses universal to each college core: Augustine and Culture Seminar sequence (ACS 1000 and 1001) with a mission-oriented focus on the study of great books, and Theology 1000: Christian Faith and Life.

These three courses were developed by CLAS to achieve the following goals:

- Acquire knowledge through inquiry informed by the Augustinian and Catholic intellectual traditions; this inquiry focuses on fundamental human questions of identity, knowledge, faith, and morality;
- Acquire foundational skills of critical thinking and communication through close reading of texts, intensive writing, and class discussion;
- Deepen a sense of values of social justice and personal responsibility through self-reflection and an awareness of the common good.

These foundation courses offer students a firm grounding in the liberal arts tradition from ancient times to the present through the distinctive lens of an Augustinian education.

### I. Augustine and Culture Seminar Sequence

“ACS (originally titled “The Core Humanities Seminar”) was created in 1992 as the foundation of the Core Curriculum in the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences. Over time, each of the other colleges have requested participation of their students in the ACS sequence resulting in its establishment as a common freshman year curriculum experience for all undergraduates as of 1995. Accordingly, even though ACS was not designed specifically as a University core, all curricular development for ACS since 1995 has aimed at a holistic first year experience across colleges. The curriculum is defined by faculty in CLAS under the direction of Dr. Marylu Hill, Director of the ACS Program.

At present, ACS provides a common classroom experience across 104 sections through:

- Common foundational readings (including the Bible, the ancient Greeks, Augustine’s *Confessions*, Shakespeare, representative and diverse voices from the 16<sup>th</sup> century to the present, and selected authors within the Catholic intellectual tradition);
- A connecting question of “Who Am I?”
- Emphasis on foundational skills of critical reading and writing
- An electronic writing portfolio
- Participation in cultural events

### **ACS and Learning Communities**

To further promote community and solidification of the first-year experience, all incoming students are housed according to their ACS assignment to create a baseline of a living/learning environment within the residence halls. Commuter students are placed in commuter sections to bolster their sense of community as well.

In 1997, the Office of Student Life partnered with ACS to create the first thematic residential learning community with 150 students. There are now eleven different opt-in learning communities with an additional one-credit theme-specific course; themes include: Leadership, Faith and Reason, Global, Environmental, Art and Culture, Creativity on the Page, Gender and Difference, Healthy Living, along with the house-master models in Moriarty and O’Dwyer Halls. As of fall 2015, approximately **43%** of the first-year class was in some form of residential learning community.

The Learning Communities have proved to be a place for partnerships to develop between ACS and the professional colleges. For example, the Environmental learning community draws on the expertise

of Engineering faculty; likewise, the Healthy Living learning community has partnered with the College of Nursing for various programming.

## II. Theology 1000: Christian Faith and Life

Inspired by the University Mission of an education “grounded in the wisdom of the Catholic intellectual tradition” this course is central in the pursuit of reflective exploration of the relationship between faith and life. Students of all faiths and cultures develop a more realized appreciation of Christian faith and morality. The course is foundational to the Villanova liberal arts experience and the institution’s Catholic identity. While most students take Theology 1000 in the freshman year, some do not based upon major-specific course sequencing.

Beyond the three foundation courses, each college seeks to fulfill additional common learning goals through designated required or elective courses intended to promote an understanding of ethics, scientific reasoning, and numeracy skills. These competencies are achieved via incorporation of a variety of humanities, social science, science, and math courses selected by each college to best fulfill their respective educational objectives. There is overlap of courses across some colleges, however there is not complete unanimity.

While all Villanovans are, at present, united through the freshman year ACS sequence and Theology 1000, the colleges have thus far only opted to incorporate these courses as central to their students’ liberal arts education. Professional colleges may be constrained by external forces, such as accrediting and regulatory bodies, that can limit the flexibility in their curricula. Therefore it is possible that a college may, at any time, choose to modify their curriculum plan and substitute one or more of these courses to support innovative learning goals and skill development essential to their mission and as necessary to maintain alignment with external regulatory and credentialing entities. Within this context, the committee discussed the current de facto UCC and issues that may affect establishment of a de jure UCC as a binding commitment for all colleges.

### **B. Alignment of the Current De Facto Core with the New *Institutional Student Learning Goals*;**

These newly developed *Institutional Student Learning Goals* encompass the entirety of any given student’s educational experience including focused learning within their major/degree program. As such all of these goals cannot be incorporated as objectives within a UCC, however the committee believes it is important that the de facto UCC be presented to the broader on- and off-campus community within the context of these educational and experiential objectives.

The de facto UCC supports some of the nine learning goals well, a few not so strongly. Here we outline some thoughts on how the de facto core addresses these nine goals and highlight opportunity areas where changes could be instituted. Refer to the appended document *Institutional Student Learning Goals* for detailed descriptions of each.

## ALIGNMENT OF THE DE FACTO CORE WITH THE *NEW* INSTITUTIONAL STUDENT LEARNING GOALS

*In Depth Study:* The upper level major requirements primarily support this goal, but the readings in ACS and THL classes lay a common base for further study. The detailed description of this goal includes science and technology which require strong quantitative skills, a connection that should be made explicit in this learning goal.

*Moral / Ethical Behavior:* All the colleges have formal ethical components in their curricula, but the de facto core also introduces specific ethical ideas via instruction on plagiarism and discussions on alcohol and other “student life” topics that ACS instructors integrate into their courses.

*Augustinian Values:* This is a central focus of ACS 1000 and 1001 and THL 1000. The common readings for these core courses provide a reference point for later courses throughout the University.

*Lifelong Learning:* No small set of courses can achieve this goal, but senior exit surveys indicate that the ACS sequence had a significant role in their intellectual development and presumably also will influence their future learning.

*Cultural Awareness:* As the title states, the ACS sequence explicitly considers the role of culture in our lives. This University goal has this expanded interpretation: “Demonstrate an understanding of global and multicultural perspectives of human behavior, achievements, and ideas.” The committee believes the de facto core lays a solid base for classical and western perspectives on behavior and achievements and ideas. Most ACS sections include some multicultural readings, but it is not a required component. The committee believes that adding more global and multicultural perspectives to ACS 1000 and 1001 and THL 1000 be considered so that these core courses lay a stronger base for “global and multicultural” awareness.

*Communication / Research:* ACS courses are writing intensive, introduce students to the basics of library research, and provide a good base for future research in advanced courses. All sections of ACS stress oral communication, and many include formal oral presentations.

*Problem Solving:* The core ACS and THL courses introduce “complex problems” that require “reasoned judgment” so support student growth in problem solving.

*Service:* Since a good number of ACS sections are tied into learning communities, many ACS students are involved in service, but this is another area where either ACS or THL could implement more comprehensive initiatives.

*Leadership:* Similarly, the many ACS sections tied into learning communities provide excellent opportunities for leadership, but again this is also an important area where either ACS or THL could implement more comprehensive initiatives.

## PART TWO

### Descriptive Explanation of the Current De Facto UCC for the University Website/ Publications

In light of the new *Institutional Student Learning Goals* and a desire for alignment of the UCC with these goals, the committee is proposing the following draft of a simplified descriptive explanation of the current de facto UCC for the university website:

#### *UCC Description:*

The Core Curriculum is grounded in the Augustinian Catholic intellectual tradition and prepares students to face the intellectual, cultural, and ethical challenges of a diverse world. As students progress through the Core Curriculum they will:

- Develop critical thinking and problem solving skills
- Gain an understanding of ethics
- Build global awareness and cultural competency necessary for global citizenry
- Develop written, verbal and electronic communication skills
- Develop quantitative skills and scientific literacy
- Learn to critically assess sources of information
- Establish team-work competency and community building
- Promote service to the common good

The **Inner Core Curriculum** consists of three foundation courses that challenge students to read critically, express knowledge through writing and oral discourse, develop an awareness of cultural contexts and the common good, and explore Christian faith and spirituality.

#### The Signature Core Courses:

These three courses are central to the first year experience and provide all students a firm grounding in the liberal arts tradition from ancient times to the present through the distinctive lens of an Augustinian education:

#### *Augustine and Culture Seminar Sequence:*

ACS 1000: Ancients

ACS 1001: Moderns

#### *Theology*

THL 1000: Christian Faith and Life

Within these courses students:

- Acquire knowledge through inquiry informed by the Augustinian and Catholic intellectual traditions; this inquiry focuses on fundamental human questions of identity, knowledge, faith, and morality
- Acquire foundational skills of critical thinking and communication through close reading of texts, intensive writing, and class discussion



- Deepen a sense of values of social justice and personal responsibility through self-reflection and an awareness of the common good

The **Outer Core Curriculum** consists of courses that build upon the intellectual skills and curiosities developed within the Inner Core. Through further study in the liberal arts and sciences and in-depth academic pursuits, students gain proficiency in quantitative and scientific reasoning, ethics, team-work, and problem solving skills and, mature in their readiness to serve as leaders in diverse communities. Each college designates specific required or elective courses within their broader curriculum to develop these academic competencies.

*From this point on the website.....* links would be included to each College's core curriculum content. Therefore each college would specifically explain on their core curriculum page how they achieve the objectives of the **Outer Core** by designating the number and types of courses within their curriculum/curricula that meet the additional core objectives (ethics, quantitative skills, scientific literacy, technological literacy, assessment of sources, global awareness, and team work skills).

## **PART THREE**

### **A. Defining a De Jure University Core Curriculum: Benefits and Concerns**

While the committee agrees that the current de facto UCC establishes a quality foundational educational experience, it recommends that the university establish a well-defined and purposeful de jure UCC as central to institutional identity and community. There is also agreement that a de jure UCC should provide the distinctive stamp of a Villanova and Augustinian education, grounded in the Catholic mission of the university. The benefits of a de jure UCC include:

- A common classroom experience shared by all students;
- A classroom experience that brings students from all four colleges together at the table;
- Foundational skills shared by all four colleges, including the primary skills of writing, reading, and discussion at a level appropriate to a community of scholars;
- Exposure to the Augustinian and Catholic intellectual traditions;
- Exposure to diversity and global awareness;
- Interdisciplinary experiences.

Some members of the committee believe that, for a forward-thinking university in transition, it is the right time to critically assess the UCC, particularly common core courses that are now part of the de facto UCC. While ACS 1000: Ancients, provides the bedrock of the Augustinian educational experience for undergraduates, and Theology 1000 builds understanding of Christian faith and spirituality in light of the Catholic heritage of the institution, the committee discussed the possibility of ACS 1001: Moderns, as an area within the UCC where changes may be instituted to better reflect the interests of all colleges. This discussion highlighted the history of ACS as a unique centerpiece of a liberal arts core specifically within CLAS. Its subsequent adoption as the freshman year experience for all students led to an expansion of sections, the creation of more Learning Communities, and enhanced university and CLAS budget investments.

***Within this context these two differing viewpoints emerged from committee discussions:***

- 1) ACS 1001 book options are diverse and instructional faculty are advised to incorporate readings and assignments that promote critical thinking and discussion of topics that reflect the complexity of human life including humanism and the natural world. ACS 1000 and ACS 1001 provide a quality full year experience, and with more than 40% of freshman engaged in a Learning Community centered around their ACS courses, the sequence provides strong connectivity between all first year students at Villanova through an introduction to, and familiarity with, the vital and distinctive Catholic and Augustinian traditions of which this university is a part. As such, it should be preserved as a critical element of the UCC.
- 2) Input by faculty outside of CLAS in the selection of readings and critical thinking assignments in ACS 1001 may direct learning that better reflects the interests and educational needs of a diverse population of students, particularly those within the professional colleges. Such input may provide a means to produce a learning experience that will benefit all students by engaging in intellectual exercises that build readiness to manage the demands of a complex, modern, technologically-advanced, multicultural, and inter-professional workplace. How input would be provided and enacted as well as the impact such alternative perspectives would have on the overall ACS experience is unclear, however if all colleges are required to commit to a de jure UCC, then the institution should provide a mechanism for addressing the needs of all colleges within the common Inner Core courses.

## **B. Suggestions for the Provost**

As this working group is a sub-committee of the APC its membership was not directly constituted by the Provost Office. Therefore this report is only advisory to the Provost. Within that context the committee is providing these suggestions for consideration:

- Creation a University Curriculum Advisory Committee with cross-college representation that would be tasked with development and implementation of a de jure UCC. This working group could also serve the educational enterprise as an advisory body working with deans and instructional faculty to identify opportunities for interdisciplinary courses or experiences and, organize the intersection of appropriate stakeholders who are best prepared to drive unique programming for Villanova as a national research institution;
- The colleges should specifically identify an already existing course(s) in their curricula, or develop a new course(s), that addresses diversity and global awareness more clearly. Diversity is a critical University Strategic Goal. As such the university should integrate global and multicultural perspectives in the common Inner Core as an opportunity area where it can readily align one of its major *Institutional Student Learning Goals* with foundational courses that build the common educational experience for students irrespective of major.
- Numeracy and technical literacy should be highlighted as a more manifest objective of a Villanova education. At present, there is no reference to quantitative skills/reasoning within the *Institutional Student Learning Goals*. While it is unlikely that any college would forgo the

inclusion of numeracy competency within their core curriculum, it is important that the university specifically addresses this learning goal within the UCC objectives.

Respectfully submitted by the APC UCC Sub- Committee,

Mark Doorley, Melinda German, Lesley Perry, Louise Russo, Robert Styer and Randy Weinstein with input from Mark Graham, Marylu Hill, Sandra Kearney, and Sally Scholz

***INSTITUTIONAL STUDENT LEARNING GOALS******Villanova graduates will be able to:***

<b>AREA</b>	<b>GOAL STATEMENT</b>
IN-DEPTH STUDY	Through in-depth academic study and application, demonstrate moral awareness and critical thinking in the context of culture, history, patterns of human behavior, science, and technology.
MORAL/ETHICAL BEHAVIOR	Identify and analyze moral and ethical questions, evaluate alternatives, and act with integrity.
AUGUSTINIAN VALUES	Develop as a whole person and grow culturally, socially, physically, intellectually, emotionally, and spiritually, grounded in the wisdom of Saint Augustine and the Catholic intellectual tradition.
LIFELONG LEARNING	Demonstrate the capability and desire to pursue continued intellectual growth through a commitment to lifelong learning.
CULTURAL AWARENESS	Demonstrate an understanding of global and multicultural perspectives of human behavior, achievements, and ideas.
COMMUNICATION/RESEARCH	Use information technology, communication techniques, and research methods to frame issues, solve problems, or create new works or knowledge.
PROBLEM SOLVING	Respond effectively and creatively to complex problems with confidence and reasoned judgment.
SERVICE	Contribute to the common good, and apply knowledge and skills to betterment of the human condition.
LEADERSHIP	Demonstrate leadership abilities through teamwork and community building.



## Undergraduate Program Outcomes

At the completion of this program, the student will be able to:

- 1) Value the uniqueness and diversity among individuals through the study of various disciplines and cultures within the context of Catholic Augustinian ideals.
- 2) Synthesize current, relevant sources of evidence to implement evidence-based nursing practice.
- 3) Deliver safe, competent, and compassionate, patient-centered care with attention to quality improvement.
- 4) Use the nursing process to provide patient-centered care based on sound clinical reasoning.
- 5) Apply information and technology to provide optimal healthcare for individuals, groups, communities, and populations.
- 6) Provide respectful care that is culturally sensitive and spiritually-based to diverse individuals, groups, communities, and populations with particular attention to meeting the needs of vulnerable populations and those experiencing health disparities.
- 7) Incorporate a variety of modalities to communicate effectively to achieve quality, patient-centered care.
- 8) Demonstrate leadership to enhance health care outcomes, influence health policy and advance the nursing profession.
- 9) Internalize the values and ethics of the nursing profession, which includes advocacy, global awareness, accountability, social responsibility, and collegiality.
- 10) Demonstrate scholarly, analytical skills to advance the science of nursing.

**Undergraduate Business Program Goals**

**ETHICS:** Graduates will recognize the ethical issues that arise in the various functions of business and are able to apply an ethical framework and relevant professional codes toward the resolution of ethical business issues.

Objectives:

1. Identify the ethical dimensions of a business decision situation applying, where relevant, professional codes of behavior
2. Determine possible courses of action and their impacts on relevant stakeholders

**TECHNOLOGY:** Graduates apply technology as a decision tool in the analysis and identification of solutions to business problems.

Objectives:

1. Demonstrate competence in spreadsheet management
2. Access and validate data towards the generation of useful information
3. Transform, interpret and apply information generated through technology

**GLOBAL AWARENESS:** Graduates possess a global mindset and understand differences in the preferences and practices related to business internationally.

1. Identify global issues and cultural considerations relevant to a business decision
2. Describe the dynamic nature of the global economy

**INNOVATION:** Graduates understand that a dynamic and cross-functional business environment demands innovative business solutions that provide value and lead to a competitive advantage.

1. Identify and critique multi-faceted business problems
2. Develop a solution to a business problem that promotes growth and fosters sustained success

**GENERAL KNOWLEDGE:** Students will share a common body of knowledge among all major business areas.

**COMMUNICATION:** Graduates demonstrate professional and effective oral and written communication skills.

1. Prepare and deliver a professional quality presentation on a business topic effectively incorporating technology aided elements where appropriate
2. Prepare a coherent and concise business communication to effectively influence stakeholders/audience

**Mission Statement**

Villanova University's College of Engineering is committed to an educational program that emphasizes technical excellence and a liberal education within the framework of the University's Augustinian and Catholic traditions. As a community of scholars, we seek to educate students to pursue both knowledge and wisdom, and to aspire to ethical and moral leadership within their chosen careers, their community, and the world.

We value a spirit of community among all members of the college that respects academic freedom and inquiry, the discovery and cultivation of new knowledge, and continued innovation in all that we do.

**The College's Vision for Undergraduate Students**

- Apply scientific and mathematical concepts and principles to solve real-world problems
- Understand the fundamentals of mathematics, physical sciences and the scientific method
- Identify and define a problem, develop and evaluate alternative solutions, and create one or more designs to solve the problem
- Communicate ideas and information effectively
- Develop self-motivation to acquire knowledge and continue the learning experience
- Become an effective member of a project team
- Maintain high professional and ethical standards

**College of Engineering Bachelor of Science Learning Objectives**

- a. An ability to apply knowledge of mathematics, science, and engineering
- b. An ability to design and conduct experiments, as well as to analyze and interpret data
- c. An ability to design a system, component, or process to meet desired needs within realistic constraints such as economic, environmental, social, political, ethical, health and safety, manufacturability, and sustainability
- d. An ability to function on multi-disciplinary teams
- e. An ability to identify, formulate, and solve engineering problems
- f. An understanding of professional and ethical responsibility
- g. An ability to communicate effectively
- h. The broad education necessary to understand the impact of engineering solutions in a global, economic, environmental, and societal context
- i. A recognition of the need for, and an ability to engage in life-long learning
- j. A knowledge of contemporary issues
- k. An ability to use the techniques, skills, and modern engineering tools necessary for engineering practice

Note: Besides the College-wide learning objectives, there are additional learning objectives for each major

Learning Goals of Foundational Courses in CLAS Core Curriculum

<b>Learning Goal 1</b>	<b>Knowledge: Inquiry Informed by Augustinian, Catholic Intellectual Traditions</b>	
	<b>Objective</b>	<p>Through interdisciplinary inquiry focused on fundamental human questions of identity, knowledge, faith, and morality, students will</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• demonstrate understanding of significant ideas and values in the Augustinian and Catholic intellectual tradition;</li> <li>• explain the relevance of the past to their understanding of the present while coming to understand the perspective of their own cultural assumptions and values; and</li> <li>• analyze the complexity of both shared and diverse human experiences from multiple points of view.</li> </ul>

<b>Learning Goal 2</b>	<b>Skills: Critical Thinking and Communication</b>	
	<b>Objective</b>	<p>Through close reading of texts in diverse genres, intensive writing, and active class participation, students will</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• develop the ability to read, reflect upon, analyze, and evaluate primary sources;</li> <li>• write essays that contain well-supported, arguable theses and demonstrate personal engagement and clear purpose; and</li> <li>• express ideas clearly, listen carefully, and enter into dialogue with others in a respectful manner.</li> </ul>

<b>Learning Goal 3</b>	<b>Values: Social Justice and Personal Responsibility</b>	
	<b>Objective</b>	<p>Through reflection on their own values and beliefs in conversation with the central themes and values of the Augustinian Catholic tradition, students will</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• grow in self-knowledge and connection to others.</li> <li>• synthesize and articulate a philosophy of life grounded in clarity of purpose, belief, and values;</li> <li>• demonstrate an understanding of human agency and the impact of personal and communal choices on the world.</li> </ul>



## The Essentials of Teaching ACS

### What is ACS?

ACS is a two-semester humanities sequence (ACS 1000: Ancients, and ACS 1001: Moderns) that educates students in Augustinian inquiry through a great-books curriculum and an intensive program of critical reading, writing, and discussion. **All first-year students are housed by their ACS assignment; many participate in selective learning communities.** Together these features give our students a distinctive first-year experience:

- Small seminars of 16 students, taught in most cases by full-time faculty members;
- A two-semester humanities sequence that is interdisciplinary and concerned with foundational texts;
- Broad engagement with the Augustinian intellectual tradition;
- Writing-intensive curriculum that emphasizes argument and analysis;
- Students from diverse colleges (CLAS, Engineering, Business, and Nursing) engaged in a common intellectual conversation;
- Integration of classroom studies and lived experience through common texts, common housing, learning communities, and required co-curricular cultural events.

### What does ACS emphasize?

- Foundational Texts of western culture
- Foundational Skills: deep reading, analytical writing, critical thinking and discussion
- Foundation in the Augustinian and Catholic Tradition

### What does foundational mean in this context?

The books we study in ACS represent the foundation or building blocks of a liberal education. Thus, it might help to think of these texts as **pre-disciplinary**, rather than interdisciplinary or narrowly disciplinary. These are the books which make the disciplines possible. So in ACS, we aim for **reading like humans with shared concerns rather than teaching the students to read like specialists.** They're not ready to be specialists yet; let's just get them to the level of reading carefully, thoughtfully, and attentively.

### ACS as a Foundational Course within the Core Curriculum

- Foundational courses and guiding questions
  - ACS: Who Am I?
  - Philosophy 1000: What can I Know?
  - Theology 1000: What do I believe?
  - Ethics 2050: How Should I Live?
- ACS as a University-wide Foundational course

### What's our role as instructors of ACS?

Our job is to help the students become careful readers of challenging and thought-provoking texts, while inviting them to step into the larger cultural conversation sparked by shared reading. We serve as role models for reading and conversing rather than information providers.

## First Year Experience at Villanova University

### Goals for the first year:

- Establish foundation of liberal arts and sciences education
- Integrate students into the **common conversation** of scholarly discourse across disciplines and colleges (through shared questions and common texts)
- Introduce students to the Augustinian and Catholic intellectual tradition
- Prepare students with foundational skills of oral and written communication, analytical reading, and critical thinking
- Create a holistic academic environment outside the classroom conducive to learning
- Introduce students to support network of academic services, including advising, educational services, and research facilities

### How we currently accomplish these goals:

- **Augustine and Culture Seminar (two semesters)**
  1. Foundational texts “Great Books” – from ancient to modern times – common texts across all sections in both semesters – with guiding question of “Who Am I?”
  2. Primary introduction to Augustinian and Catholic Intellectual Tradition
  3. Emphasis on foundation skills of oral and written communication, analytical reading, critical thinking, and introduction to research
  4. Year-long **culminating writing portfolio** (electronic – stays with all students all four years)
  5. Predominantly taught by full-time faculty with Ph.D.s rather than graduate students or adjuncts
- **Residential Component:** all first year students housed by ACS section
  1. Continuing conversations and group work in residence hall
  2. Community bonding through foundational course of ACS
- **Learning Communities:** year-long themed, residentially-based ACS sections with additional co-curricular programming (students opt-in to these programs)
  1. Close to **one half** of the first-year students are already in one of the learning communities (approximately 680 students)
  2. **Learning Community themes:**
    - a. Leadership
    - b. Global
    - c. Environmental
    - d. Healthy Living
    - e. Art and Culture
    - f. Caritas (Service Learning)
    - g. Faith and Reason
    - h. Freedom and Virtue
    - i. Truth and Purpose
    - j. Crossroads (Science)(NEW this fall)
    - k. Creativity (NEW this fall)