General Education Reform: Advice from the Trenches

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Council of Colleges of Arts and Sciences Meeting
November 3, 2012
Agenda

• Overview of La Salle University

• The Six P’s Across Time
  • Purpose
  • Participants
  • Processes
  • Practices
  • Potholes
  • Patches
La Salle University

• De La Salle Christian Brothers University, 150 years old
  • Personal attention,
  • Sense of community,
  • Theory/practice,
  • Global perspective,
  • Education for the greater good

• Urban, comprehensive, Master’s II
  • Located in Philadelphia, PA
  • Campuses in two nearby counties
  • Programs in Prague and in Basel

• Enrollment: 6,580
Timeline

Fall, 2009

Model

1

A Core Curriculum Discussion
2009-10: “A Core Curriculum Discussion”

• Purpose
  • Begin discussion of the mission of a core curriculum and consider change to a new core

• Participants
  • Dean of Arts and Sciences
  • Task force 1 of full-time faculty

• Process

- Existing core curriculum (2000)
- Discuss and create vision for “a core discussion”
- Mission and vision of a core curriculum
Reflection

• Best practices
  • Task Force 1 = Arts and Sciences disciplines

• Pothole
  • Former Provost did not want to start the process of reviewing and revising the core

• Patch
  • School of Arts and Sciences only Task Force 1
Timeline

Model

1

2009-10       July, 2010

A Core Curriculum Discussion

Meeting with Provosts
July 2010: Meeting with Provosts

- **Purpose**
  - Begin to create a new core curriculum

- **Participants**
  - Outgoing Provost
  - Incoming Provost
  - Task force 2

- **Process**
Reflection

• Best practices
  • Transition between provosts

• Pothole
  • Time delay to next step

• Patch
  • Move to next step in December, 2010
Timeline

2009

July, 2010

Dec. 2010

A Core Curriculum Discussion

Meeting with Provosts

Creation of a Plan

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December, 2010: Planning

• Purpose
  • Create a plan

• Participants
  • Task force 2

• Process

 existing core curriculum (2000)

Discuss process

Created a plan

Research processes
Reflection

• Best practices
  • Task force worked well together

• Pothole
  • Hard to prioritize activities
  • Hard to determine next steps

• Patch
  • Research best “potholes and patches”
Timeline

Model

1

2

A Core Curriculum Discussion

Meeting with Provosts

Creation of a Plan

Faculty Survey

2009 -10
July, 2010
Dec. 2010
Spr. 2011
Spring 2011: Faculty Survey

- **Purpose**
  - Survey the faculty on current core and ideal core

- **Participants**
  - Task force 2
  - Faculty, Student Life, Assessment Committee, Chairs

- **Process**

  - Existing core curriculum (2000)
  - Research other core curricula
  - Administer survey; Interpret data
  - Survey results
Reflection

• Best practices
  • Get as much faculty feedback as possible

• Pothole
  • Loss of focus
  • Discussing for the sake of discussion

• Patch
  • Set a definite time limit to consultations
Timeline

- 2009-10: A Core Curriculum Discussion
- July 2010: Meeting with Provosts
- Dec. 2010: Creation of a Plan
- Spr. 2011: Faculty Survey
- Spr. 2012: Learning Goals and Models
Spring 2012: Learning Goals and Models

- **Purpose**
  - Define the learning goals and model core curricula

- **Participants**
  - Task force 2
  - Administration and faculty review

- **Process**
  - Survey results
  - Research other core curricula
  - Define learning goals and models
  - Model 1
  - Model 2
  - Model 3
  - Learning goals
Reflection

- Best practices
  - Learning goals are important for assessment
  - Several alternative models
    - Flexible models
    - Common elements
    - Easy to understand
    - Smaller number of courses

- Pothole
  - No model had faculty support
  - Models did not reflect mission and Catholic identity
  - Tension was created!

- Patch
  - Go back to the drawing board!
Timeline

1. A Core Curriculum Discussion
2. Meeting with Provosts
3. Creation of a Plan
4. Faculty Survey
5. Learning Goals and Models
6. New Model

2009-10: Meeting with Provosts
July, 2010: Creation of a Plan
Dec. 2010: Faculty Survey
Spr. 2011: Learning Goals and Models
Spr. 2012: New Model
Sum. 2012: New Model
Summer 2012: New Model

• Purpose
  • Create a new model

• Participants
  • Task force 2

• Process

Survey results

Possible solutions

Define a new model

Model 4
Reflection

• Best practices
  • Used principles of communication
    • Define the problem
    • Set goals
    • Look at some possible solutions
    • Prioritize

• Pothole
  • Trying to move forward by combining a hybrid with features from all three models

• Patch
  • Throw out the old models
  • Push the “Reset” button
  • Focus on the problems, goals and possible solutions for a new core
Timeline

A Core Curriculum Discussion
Meeting with Provosts
Creation of a Plan
Faculty Survey
Learning Goals and Models
New Model
Curriculum Committee Review

Model

2009 -10
July, 2010
Dec. 2010
Spr. 2011
Spr. 2012
Sum.2012
Fall 2012
Fall 2012: Curriculum Committee Review

• Purpose
  • Review by the University Curriculum Committee

• Participants
  • Task force 2
  • University Curriculum Committee

• Process
Reflection

• Best practices
  • Gathered feedback from university curriculum committee
  • Committee members were cooperative

• Pothole
  • Elements of the model may be difficult to implement
    • Philadelphia seminar
    • Common experience/element
    • Schedule revision

• Patch
  • Meet with associate and assistant deans regarding implementation
  • Meet with chairpersons regarding departmental learning goals
Timeline


- Meeting with Provosts
- Creation of a Plan
- Faculty Survey
- Learning Goals and Models
- New Model
- Curriculum Committee Review
- Model Revision

A Core Curriculum Discussion
Fall 2012: Model 4 Revision

• Purpose
  • Review model 4
  • Create an educational rubric and goals

• Participants
  • Task force 2
Reflection

• Best practices
  • Ability to react to feedback
  • Review distribution of courses

• Pothole
  • Departments may be territorial

• Patch
  • Adhere to learning goals
Timeline

A Core Curriculum Discussion

Model Revision

Detailed Model

Model Implementation

Model Launch

2009-10
2010-2012
Spring 2013
2013-14
Fall 2014?
2013 and beyond: Next Steps

• Purpose
  • Present model 4 to Curriculum and Academic Affairs committees, then faculty
  • If model 4 approved
    • Resolve implementation details
    • Develop new courses
    • Disseminate criteria for courses
    • Revise schedule
    • Recommend a director and/or core committee

• Participants
  • Task force 2
  • Faculty
Reflection

• Best practices
  • Gather direction from President
  • Build consensus

• Pothole
  • Check the concerns of the President and the Provost up front
  • Process is long and slow

• Patch
  • Got feedback from President and Provost
Questions?

Contact

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General Education Reform: Advice from the Trenches

Dr. Patricia Mosto
Dean
College of Liberal Arts, Education and Sciences
Lawrenceville Campus
- 3,650 undergraduates and 900 graduates
  - College of Business Administration
  - College of Continuing Studies
  - School of Fine and Performing Arts
  - College of Liberal Arts, Education and Sciences

Princeton Campus
- 300 Undergraduates
  - Westminster Choir College
Rider University

Demographics
- 29% from Outside NJ
- 36 States
- 61 Countries

Freshman Averages
- 3.32 cumulative GPA
- SAT: 1600

Transfer Average
- 3.00 cumulative GPA
Why revised the core curriculum?

• A 30 year old curriculum
• Internal Imperatives:
  • Faculty perceptions
  • Institutional goals
• External Imperatives:
  • Partnership with LEAP
  • External reviews
  • Recruitment and retention issues
Who initiated the process?

Dean’s Task Forces

- Core curriculum reform
- Core curriculum integration
- Academic Policy Committee (APC) approval
First steps

• Open invitation, by the Dean, to faculty & other divisions
• Broad disciplinary representation
• AAC&U Summer Institute: Shared Futures
Focusing Questions

• What do graduates need today?
• What does the world need from them?
• How will we define our core objectives?
• What kind of learning experiences meet our core objectives?
• What structures will best deliver those experiences?
• How do we integrate the core in the overall curriculum?
• How do we build co-curricular experiences?
• How will we accommodate transfer students?
• How will we assess the core outcomes?
Process

Academic breath and connection building

- Communication skills/literacy
- Problem solving/critical skills
- Global understanding
- Lifelong learning skills
Multidimensional Core

- Link courses & co-teaching
- Co-curricular activities
- Learning communities
- Service learning
- Teach-ins
- Study abroad
- Career panels
- Shadowing
- CVP
- Career ladders
- Capstone course
- Student peer mentoring
Supporting Infrastructure

- Developing faculty for new approach
- Funding departments for new initiatives
- Motivating faculty
- Recognizing invested faculty
- Creating a system for information
- Developing assessment practices
Process

- Mission statement and goals
- Survey of faculty, alums and students:
  - Value of core
  - Necessary skills
  - Extent of integration
  - Effectiveness
What we learned?

Transparency & open communication are key

- Use of Learning Management System (Blackboard)
- Explicit assessment of existing core
- Report on survey data
Initiatives

• AAC&U Summer Institute team presented at a Faculty Forum
• Task force members visited each department/program asking:
  • *In your discipline, what are the founding principles, the big questions and the big ideas?*
  • *What should a globally competent person understand about your discipline?*
• Created a series of “model courses” as concrete examples for application of new core goals
• Dean run a series of faculty forums
Implementation

• Incorporate best practices
• Include approaches to address global learning
• Transcend departmental boundaries
• Use multiple team-taught courses approach
• Developing linked courses
• Explore vertical & horizontal integration strategies
Course Design Principles

Courses should:

• enhance **global learning**
• cultivate **different perspectives**
• focus on **big ideas**
• Promote **evaluation and integration of data (qual./quant)**
• Include **primary sources** from the disciplines
• Incorporate the **history** of the disciplines
Foundational competencies:
  • Quantitative thinking
  • Critical reading, writing and speaking
  • Linguistic and cultural understanding
  • Scientific thinking

Woven throughout:
  • Global understanding
  • Historical perspectives
  • Ethical values
  • Technological literacy
  • Meaningful co-curricular activities
Next Steps

• Propose capstone courses
• Obtain APC approval of mission and goals
• Continue forums & information sharing
• Complete new core proposal for APC
Assessment

• Faculty development for core teaching
• Adapt elements of AAC&U VALUE rubrics
• Evaluate the usefulness of E-Portfolios
• Encourage qualitative assessments
• Hold assessment workshops
Questions?

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