

Faculty Forum

By and for the Faculty of the University of Denver



Vol. XIV, No. 1

January 2000

History of the Core and Curriculum Governance

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The “Core” curriculum was created in 1984 as the foundation for undergraduate studies at the University of Denver. In its original form the Core curriculum included thematic interdisciplinary studies at the 0xxx and 1xxx levels. Most students enrolled in these year-long liberal arts and sciences courses during their first and second years at the University. In many ways the original Core curriculum reshaped the predominant academic mindset regarding design and implementation of undergraduate general education requirements. The Core curriculum presented undergraduates with an integrated experience that takes the student beyond traditional area requirements to consider interdisciplinary topics and approaches. Since original inception and implementation of the Core, the University of Denver has been cited as one of 12 resource institutions nationally for its innovative curriculum. Also in the mid-80s, “The College” was instituted as the administrative body for the undergraduate academic experience at University of Denver. Charles (“Chuck”) Cortese served as Dean of The College until 1989. Judy Snyder was Dean of The College until the administration was restructured under the Vice-Provost model.

In 1992, graduate and undergraduate administration and curriculum governance were reorganized under a Vice-Provost Administrative Model. This model was the result of a joint effort between the Academic Planning and Executive Committees of the Faculty Senate and the Provost. It was approved by vote of the Faculty Senate on October 8, 1992. The preamble to the Vice-Provost Model reads as follows:

The administrative emphasis of this plan is on faculty governance in quality academic programming. It would involve reorganization of the office of the Dean of the College and Office of the Dean of Graduate Studies. Not only would the plan eliminate the structural anomalies which for years have plagued The College, but it would also make possible an intensive, faculty-centered and faculty-owned examination of general education in the

much larger context of academic programming in our departments, divisions, schools and colleges, in concert with the mission and goals identified in our University's strategic plan.

The goal of the Vice-Provost Governance model was to improve administrative decision making at the University with formal faculty input through the Graduate and Undergraduate Councils. Indeed, the model was to insure faculty ownership of the curricula. Therefore the Councils were to work conjointly with the Senate, faculty members, and the deans. On May 13, 1994, the Senate passed a resolution to tie formally the Senate's and Council's votes to a notice of motion procedure. When issues at either Council came up which affected an entire academic unit – usually this meant a vote on a degree by a particular unit, the councils created a notice of motion procedure where representatives of the Senate were to take back the issue to the full Senate to have the opportunity to react to the motion before it was approved by either council. The representatives were required to then inform the respective Vice-Provost of any concern from the full Senate before a final vote was taken at the Council to send the recommendation to the Provost. This system has worked well to insure that faculty voice is always heard on issues, especially curricular ones, that affect an entire academic unit (e.g., departments, school, or college).

The Undergraduate Vice-Provost (UVP) is designated as the Provost's chief deputy and coordinator of undergraduate activities: responsible for implementing recommendations of the Undergraduate Council in cooperation with deans, faculty committees, Faculty Senate Committees and the Core Curriculum Committee. If and when they arise, complaints should be referred to the Faculty Senate, which may vote to hold an appropriate referendum on an issue. Results of any such vote are referred to the Provost. Numerous directors, including Director of Core, report to the UVP. After a national search, Dr. Sheila Phelan Wright joined the University as Vice-Provost of Undergraduate Studies in July, 1993. Will Gravely was Interim Director of Core from 1992-1994. Gregory Robbins served as Director of Core from 1995 until his resignation at the end of Winter Quarter, 1999.

As part of the 1992 Vice-Provost Governance system, the Undergraduate Vice-Provost and Undergraduate Council work together to create and approve any curricular issues. To further this work, the document created a Core Curriculum Committee to serve as the agent for Core curricular change and improvement. The Core Curriculum Committee was an agent of the Undergraduate Council and made recommendations which were to be approved by the Council and then, as was later approved, sent to the Senate as notice of motion and then back again to the Council for final vote. In the 1994-1995 academic year, efforts of the Core Curriculum Committee (directed by Sheila Wright) produced a proposal to revise Core to extend studies into the Junior and Senior years by creation of Core 2000 courses. These Core 2000 courses placed greater emphasis on interdisciplinary teaching, were to be team-taught by faculty in different divisions, and were cross-listed as AHUM/SOCS, AHUM/NATS, or SOCS/NATS. Most Core 1000 courses were limited to two quarters and were complemented with a Core 2000 course in the Junior or Senior year (the so-called 8 + 4 model). The "Core 2000" revision also proposed to gradually reduce class size.

The Faculty Senate did facilitate faculty discussion of the Core 2000 proposal and a Senate/faculty vote. Linda Cobb-Reiley, then Faculty Senate President, scheduled three faculty fora (open meetings between faculty, administrators and members of the Core Curriculum Committee) during January and February, 1995. The meetings addressed: 1) What is Core? What are integrated, interdisciplinary studies?; 2) Structural changes to Core; and 3) Resource allocation for Core. As a result of faculty input in these meetings, the proposal was revised and senators were urged to have discussions with their departmental constituencies. The Core proposal revisions and the Core proposal as a whole were voted on at a special Faculty Senate Meeting on Friday, March 3, 1995. The voting process followed procedural motions that were approved in the Faculty Senate Meeting of February 24, 1995. As reflected in the minutes of the Feb. 24th meeting of the Faculty Senate, these motions were as follows:

1. CORE revisions (the Feb. 18 proposal) will be voted on at a special Senate meeting at 12 pm Friday, March 3, 1995.
2. The vote will be on the CORE Curriculum proposal as a whole.
3. Senators will cast their individual votes on the CORE Curriculum proposal by written ballot at the Senate meeting designated for the vote. These ballots will be tallied by the Executive Secretary of the Senate and the Chair of NCR who will then destroy the ballots and report the outcome of the vote to the Senate.
4. At the meeting designated for the vote, one Senator from each department or school and the College of Law will submit a form (provided by the Senate office) indicating the number of members of the Senate constituency* who, as a result of a formal vote in her/his unit, favor the proposed CORE curriculum proposal, oppose it, or abstain from voting on it. These votes will be tallied by the Executive Secretary of the Senate and the Chair of NCR who will report to the Senate the aggregate vote of all faculty and the aggregate vote in the three units most affected by the proposal (Arts & Humanities, Social Sciences, Natural Sciences). The Executive Secretary and NCR Chair will then destroy the ballots. In no case will votes by individual departments, schools or divisions be reported.

*The Senate constituency consists of those individuals with full time continuing appointments as Professors, Associate Professors, Assistant Professors, and Instructors, and equivalent Professional, Research and Librarian ranks. [Amended by a motion approved on March 3, 1995, the aggregate vote of faculty on CORE revisions also included Lecturers.]
5. The vote of the Senate (#3 above) will be forwarded in a timely fashion as a recommendation to the Undergraduate Council. In addition, at the same time the aggregate vote of all faculty and the aggregate vote of the three units most affected by the proposal (#4 above) will be forwarded to the Undergraduate Council.

In the March 3, 1995, Faculty Senate meeting a ballot was distributed to each Senator for his/her vote on the Senate recommendation to approve Core revisions. These, along with ballots reflecting the aggregate vote of all faculty on Core revisions, were taken to be counted by Dennis Barrett, Chair of NCR, and Jeff Rothstein (GSSW), in place of the Executive Secretary who was out of town. Vote results on the recommendation to approve Core revisions were announced and later corrected because one unit ballot was inadvertently not included in the tally, and there was a

misinterpretation of “units most affected” in the first count. The following votes were recorded:

	IN FAVOR	AGAINST	ABSTAIN	UNABLE TO VOTE
SENATE VOTE	26	11	2	11
AGGREGATE SUB-TOTAL *	80	85	21	22
AGGREGATE GRAND TOTAL	157	118	41	37

* “Aggregate Sub-Total” is the vote of faculty in units most affected by CORE revisions.

According to minutes of the February 24, 1995, meeting of the Faculty Senate (just preceding the voting meeting), President Cobb-Reiley “stressed that the purpose of the process was to maximize faculty input to and discussion of the CORE revisions and to avoid the confrontational nature of holding a faculty referendum on CORE after the Undergraduate Council (UGC) vote on revisions. Therefore the process specifies that the Senate will vote on proposed CORE revision and send a recommendation to the UGC before it votes. She also emphasized that, according to the Senate Constitution, the Senate makes recommendations on proposals, not final decisions.”

Final approval of the Core proposal was by vote of the Undergraduate Council (as per the Vice-Provost Model of 1992). The Undergraduate Council approved the Core 2000 proposal by a 13-2 vote on March 6, 1995. Structural changes in the Core were proposed for a three-year period to allow faculty time to develop team-taught interdisciplinary courses at the 2000 level, experiment with instructional methods, and assess outcomes. During the third year, the Core faculty, administration, and outside evaluators were to evaluate the Core curriculum.

In November, 1998, Provost William Zaranka initiated discussion of the three-year evaluation. In January, 1999, the Core Curriculum presented the Provost with a White Paper that offered critique of the Core Curriculum and suggested changes in the Core. After three meetings of an ad hoc “Core Mission and Goals Committee”, a Core Mission and Goals statement was drafted. Later, an ad hoc “Core Construction Committee” was formed by the Provost with input from Deans and Faculty Senate President Arthur Best. At the end of Winter Quarter, 1999, the Core Curriculum Committee and the Director of the Core resigned. The present Core Construction Committee (CCC) was given the charge to evaluate the Core 2000 structure and recommend any improvements that might better serve the academic needs of our students and align the Core experience with the University Mission and Goals. The CCC began its deliberations during Spring Quarter 1999, and continued working with a regular schedule throughout the Summer and Fall Quarters (through Interterm), and has created a proposal for the next generation of Core. This proposal has been sent to the newly structured administrative committee (Provost Bill Zaranka, Vice-Provost Sheila Wright, Dean Robert Coombe (NSME), Dean Greg Kvistad (AH/SS), Dean Tom Farer (GSIS), and Dean Jim Griesemer (DCB)).