

## **Undergraduate Core Curriculum Redesign Task Force Phase I: Discovery - Report 2023-2024**

### **Introduction**

The Core Curriculum at USF was first adopted in 2002 as foundational to the undergraduate academic experience. The 2027 Strategic Plan's Goal 1 to re-imagine a Jesuit education initiated a process of review and redesign of the Core Curriculum. The process of reviewing and redesigning the Core Curriculum is broken into three general phases: discovery, design, and implementation. The first discovery phase of the Core Curriculum redesign began this 2023-2024 academic year with the goal of examining the current Core Curriculum and obtaining external peer and aspirant general education/core curricula through a window and mirror approach, described in detail in section 3 of this report. This report summarizes the work of Phase I Discovery.

The task force members of this initial Phase I Discovery consisted of faculty, staff, and librarians and was co-chaired by a faculty member and an administrator. The full membership of the task force can be found [here](#).

### **Core Value Statement**

USF's core curriculum will empower you with the skills and tools necessary to thrive in your personal, professional, and intellectual journeys. We are a diverse community that cares for and respects one another; our classes facilitate listening to and learning from one another. Our faculty will mentor you in building bridges to your future calling.

Embodying the Jesuit tradition of liberal arts education, our core curriculum is designed to broaden your horizons, providing you a deeper understanding of our shared humanity and collective purpose to promote the common good. You will gain perspectives that have enduring value, no matter what field you pursue. The core curriculum expands the walls of the classroom by including fieldwork and engagement with communities in the city. You will access the unique global and local possibilities and networks offered by the San Francisco Bay Area, long a hub for invention and experimentation. In an age of accelerating change, the core prepares you to help shape the future, building up the world with confidence and hope.

### **Mirror Approach**

#### *Goal*

The "Mirror group's" goal was to find out as much information as we could about the current core curriculum at USF.

### *Data Collection Process*

We investigated the number of core classes taught in each area, who teaches them, and standard enrollment numbers. We looked at which classes transfer students took on campus, and which core requirements were most frequently fulfilled through AP/IB credits. We also designed a survey for all current students, faculty and staff to ask about current core learning outcomes, high impact learning practices and experiences, and student engagement and pedagogical practices.

### *Findings and Recommendations*

#### *Finding One: There is more than one kind of core class.*

We found that many courses do have between 35-37 students enrolled in the sciences, humanities, and the social sciences. But other classes such as RHET, lab classes, and studio classes often have more like 18 students in each course. Finally, some core classes, namely CEL and CD, are frequently integrated into majors, and generally have smaller enrollment numbers.

#### *Finding Two: Core Credit Creep*

The core curriculum is officially 44 units, however this number does not include foreign language requirements, CEL, CD or the frequent instances when students take two courses to fulfill their A-2 (Writing and Composition) requirement. What this means is that some students need 60 units to fulfill their core requirements, which is particularly challenging for those students in majors that carry more units, such as nursing and engineering.

This means that these students cannot take advantage of other opportunities that USF might offer them, such as LLC's or Study Abroad.

#### *Finding Three: Most Core Classes are taught by Part Time Faculty*

Between 60-70% of core courses offered in Philosophy, Ethics, Visual and Performing Arts and Rhetoric are taught by part-time faculty. Math, Social Sciences, CEL and CD courses are evenly split between full and part time faculty. Lab Sciences (69%), History (60-70%) and Theology (65-69%) are the only core areas that have more full time than part time faculty teaching the available sections.

#### *Finding Four: There is broad agreement between students, faculty, librarians, and staff on educational values and competencies.*

Faculty, staff and students had a broad agreement placing strong value on experiential learning, including internships and service learning in our survey. There was also consensus that being exposed to a variety of disciplines (a breadth requirement) was considered an important aspect

of their education. Finally, all parties greatly valued being exposed to a diversity of human experiences and opinions.

In terms of competencies and skills, Writing and communications skills were considered essential by a very significant majority of students, staff, faculty and librarians who took the survey. Working in teams, and developing critical analytical skills were also very strongly ranked as important.

*Finding Five: Students want high impact learning experiences*

This includes strong support for internships, problem based learning, research with faculty, study abroad, and being part of learning communities. There was less support for First Year Seminars and e-portfolios, though these opportunities are optional for students.

## **Window Approach**

*Goal*

The “Windows Group’s” goal was to explore the core curriculums of other universities to learn of the multitude of contents, shapes and purposes being offered. The universities were selected from a wide diversity of possibilities: Jesuit – non Jesuit, public – private, large – small, etc. in order to gather a bouquet of options within the variety of core curriculums presented to undergraduate students across the country. Our goal was not only to survey the structure and the content of these core curriculums but also to identify their purpose and the outcome sought for the students at the various universities.

*Data Collection Process*

The data collection process started with identifying which types of institutions we wanted to examine. The group brainstormed with the goal of taking an open approach to the types of institutions and listed these broad categories of institutional types:

AJCU

NSSE Comparators

Private Liberal Arts Institutions

Institutions that collaborate for General Education programs

UCs

First Year Experience Top Performers as determined by the ranking from the *US News and World Report*

Once these institutional types were selected, the group discussed key attributes of a general education/core curriculum to examine with each institution. The key attributes and questions included:

- Mission Statement/Goal
- Learning Outcomes - *What do colleges want students to get out of the Core?*
- How is their Core marketed? What is their messaging?
- Core requirements? (ex: courses, units)
- Structures and sequencing (ex: year, themes, bundles)
- Transfer students - How much of the core curriculum do they need to complete?
- Are there multiple versions of the core curriculum for different groups of students?
- Is there a requirement for the integration with knowledge of technology?
- Can students receive some type of certification along the way?
- Is there a required major declaration in year 1, 2 or 3?
- Wow factor

The methodology behind collecting data on institutions included these steps:

- Google sheet set up with tabs for each type of institution selected with access to all task force members
- Each member will examine two institutions of the type they've selected and respond to the initial key questions
- Gather findings from first round of institutions and share with the group
- Determine second round of institutions to research and any additional criteria
- Share findings
- Engage in meta-findings and observations

Included in the first round of institutions were:

#### **AJCUs**

- Seattle University
- Georgetown University
- Boston College\*

#### **Private Liberal Arts**

- Macalester College
- Bates College
- Elon University\*
- Baylor University\*
- Columbia University
- Brown University

#### **Public Universities | UCs**

- UCLA
- UC Davis
- UC Santa Cruz

\*Denotes First Year Top Performer

Included in the second round of institutions were:

### **AJCUs**

- Loyola Marymount University
- Gonzaga University
- Santa Clara University
- Loyola University Chicago

### **Private / Liberal Arts**

- Chapman University
- University of the Pacific
- Hofstra University
- University of San Diego

### *Findings*

According to the American Association of Colleges and Universities ([AAC&U](#)) training that the committee attended, the general education structure for undergraduate universities typically falls into three categories: Distribution Model, Core Curriculum Model, and Hybrid Model. Most institutions have adopted the Hybrid Model, which combines thematic courses with the distribution of foundational classes necessary for degree completion. For instance, the University of California and Georgetown University both employ a Distribution Model, while Elon University, Baylor University, Boston College, and the University of San Diego utilize a Hybrid approach to their core curriculum.

The institutions that the Window group reviewed shared core competencies such as written communication, mathematical reasoning, second language proficiency, oral communication, critical thinking, information literacy, and quantitative reasoning. An example of a topic-based core requirement is as follows:

- Equitable Thinking: Understanding methods to address injustice and inequality
- Global Perspective: Recognizing the interconnectedness of the human experience across cultures and environments.

In addition, the universities reviewed exhibited varied approaches to the course and credit requirements, and those with hybrid models are commonly structured by areas, levels, or tiers. An example from the University of San Diego illustrates this structure:

- Foundations: Encouraging students to explore truth, goodness, personal identity, and social identity
- Explorations: Allowing students to delve into the breadth of liberal arts, focusing on social identity, scientific literacy, and personal expression
- Integrations: Providing opportunities for students to recognize connections between

disciplines and apply knowledge in their daily lives

What caught the attention of the committee members was how universities used their core curriculum to reflect their central values. Core requirements were often organized around themes and framing questions, scaffolded by year. For example:

#### Gonzaga University Core Curriculum

- Year 1: Understanding and Creating: *How do we pursue knowledge and create understanding?*
- Year 2: Being and Becoming: *Who are we and what does it mean to be human?*
- Year 3: Caring and Doing: *What principles characterize a well-lived life?*
- Year 4: Imagining the Possible: *What is our role in the world?*

Several key factors in the core requirements that stood out to committee members:

- Common reading experiences for first-year students embedded in the curriculum
- Integration of high-impact practices throughout core requirements
- Clear articulation of the value of the Core
- Culminating integration component for juniors or seniors
- Transfer-friendly policies
- Intentional communication strategies to parents/families regarding the value of the Core

Threading key values and competencies throughout the Core was emphasized rather than concentrating them in a single course. This approach highlights the value of education beyond career preparation, aiming for a fulfilled life. The emphasis on the Initial Year experience lays the foundation for students.

#### *Recommendations*

1. Communication and Marketing: Ensuring that a communication and marketing plan is connected to the implementation of a revised core will be central to a successful adoption by the university community. This includes communication about the core to families.
2. Intentional pathways for Transfer students: USF's revised core should offer clear pathways for transfer students, assisting them in completing their degrees in a timely manner.
3. Integration of Key Values in Core Curriculum: USF should integrate key values and competencies throughout the core curriculum rather than focusing on isolated courses. Key values at USF include diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) and civic engagement. This approach fosters a holistic educational experience that prepares students for a fulfilling life beyond their careers.
4. Emphasis on High-Impact Practices: Promote the integration of high-impact practices such as undergraduate research, internships, and service learning, throughout the core curriculum. These experiences enhance student engagement and retention while developing essential skills for future success.

5. Incorporation of Digital Fluency: Emphasize the importance of information literacy and digital fluency within the core curriculum. USF should provide opportunities for students to develop these skills, preparing them for the demands of the digital age.
6. Alignment with Institutional Values: USF must continue to connect our core curriculum with the institutional values and mission. This ensures that the core curriculum reflects the USF's unique identity and priorities, enhancing its overall impact and relevance..

## **Core Curriculum Survey: Faculty and Staff, Student**

### *Survey Methodology*

The CRTF in partnership with the Office of Assessment and Accreditation Support (OAAS) administered a survey to faculty, staff, librarians, and students as part of the discovery process of data collection. The survey focused on gains from a USF education, current Core Curriculum learning outcomes, skills and competencies, high impact practices, and engaging students in learning. The student survey was administered to all undergraduate and graduate students via Qualtrics for three weeks between January-February. The faculty and staff survey was also built in Qualtrics and distributed through the Provost Newsletter, Deans Offices, and the USFFA newsletter. The survey remained open for two weeks in February.

### *Survey Demographic*

A total of 1239 students responded to the survey with 68% (n=845) of the respondents undergraduate students and 32% (n=394) graduate students. Undergraduate transfer students comprised 3% (n = 23) of the respondents. Distribution of student respondents across schools and colleges are as follows:

- Undergraduate Students: 68% (n=845)
  - a. College of Arts & Sciences = 67%
  - b. School of Management = 16%
  - c. School of Nursing and Health Professions = 18%
- Graduate Students: 32% (n=394)
  - a. College of Arts & Sciences = 24%
  - b. School of Management = 14%
  - c. School of Nursing and Health Professions = 15%
  - d. School of Education = 33%
  - e. School of Law = 14%

A total of 253 faculty, staff, and librarians responded to the survey. Among the respondents, representation across colleges and schools are as follows:

- College of Arts & Sciences = 80%
- School of Management = 3%
- School of Nursing and Health Professions = 8%
- School of Education = 1%
- School of Law = 4%

- Staff and do not teach in the Core = 3%

Additionally, 75% of the respondents indicated that they teach in the Core Curriculum full-time while 25% of the respondents teach in the Core Curriculum part-time. The survey also asked how many years they have been teaching at USF. Fifty-six percent of the respondents indicated teaching at USF for 11 or more years and 72% of respondents answered that they *often* or *always* teach Core courses.

### *Findings*

#### *Gains from USF*

When asked, “What do you hope to gain from being a student at USF? Select all that apply.” students, faculty, staff, and librarians were largely in alignment with each other in the following categories with response rates within 10% of each other:

- Getting a degree/ credential (highest ranked response for both at 92% of respondents)
- New skills that can be applied in an employment setting
- Networks that will help get a job
- Engagement with a diverse group of people
- New friends
- Faculty mentors
- Understand themselves and the world

Notable areas of ‘misalignment’ were:

- Engagement with social justice issues (69% response rate for faculty/staff/librarians but only 43% response rate from students)
- Knowledge of Jesuit values (28% response rate from faculty/staff/librarians and only 14% from students)

Responses from other survey questions provide potential insight into this discrepancy: students do rank the *opportunity* to engage in social justice highly (see section ii, Learning Outcomes), which perhaps indicates that the wording of this option may have affected the response rate. It is also possible that the meaning of ‘social justice’ holds different connotations for students than it does for faculty/staff/librarians. As for Jesuit values, we see that faculty/staff/librarians and students highly rank responses in this question and other questions that are related to Jesuit values despite the low ranking of this category. Perhaps this is an area where the definition of Jesuit values could be amplified or re-articulated.

#### *Learning Outcomes*

When given a list of current core learning outcomes and asked, “How important to your education at USF are each of the following outcomes?” an overall higher response rate was observed by faculty than by students with two notable exceptions:



- Gaining skills necessary to link education to service (85% students, 77% faculty/staff/librarians)
- Comprehending variations of people's relationship with God and developing respect for the religious beliefs of others (40% students, 35% faculty/staff/librarians)

Other areas of alignment (within 10%) and with faculty demonstrating a higher response rate were:

- Understanding and valuing cultural and ethnic differences in a multicultural society and globalizing world, understanding the nature of society and the relationships between individuals and groups (both roughly 80% response rate)
- Understanding the moral dimension of every significant human choice/taking seriously how and who we choose to be in the world, being exposed for opportunities for social justice (both roughly 70%)
- Appreciate and critical evaluation of the arts (roughly 60%)

There were three areas of greater than 10% difference, yet two of these three are still ranked highly by students and less highly as faculty/staff/librarians:

- Being exposed to a wide breadth of academic disciplines as a foundation for a general liberal arts education (90% faculty/staff/librarians, 69% students)
- Understanding the process of seeking truth and disseminating knowledge by taking a wide breadth of disciplines (85% faculty/staff/librarians, 73% students)

Despite the apparent gap between faculty/staff/librarians and students in these categories, it is important to note that these are the fourth and fifth most selected responses (out of ten total), indicating that these are still important to a student's view of their USF education.

One area of misalignment between faculty/staff/librarians and students that does have a lower response rate was understanding historical traditions (65% faculty/staff/librarians and 49% students). This may be an area of further exploration and re-visioning.

### *Skills and Competencies*

When asked, "What skills and competencies are essential for a USF graduate to have acquired? Select all that apply." the top three categories for both students and faculty/staff/librarians were as follows:

- Written and oral communication (88% students, 97% faculty/staff/librarians)
- Critical and creative thinking (87% students, 96% faculty/staff/librarians)
- Teamwork and problem solving (89% students, 82% faculty/staff/librarians)

The remaining skills on the list showed close alignment (within 10%), although they were generally selected at lower rates. These skills include:

- Intercultural competence, knowledge about social systems (both roughly 70%)

- Civic knowledge and engagement (between 60-65%)
- Knowledge of human cultures (between 60-65%)
- Data and quantitative literacy (between 60-65%)
- Knowledge of the physical world (between 60-65%)
- Technological proficiency (between 60-65%)

Note that all of these skills were selected as essential by more than a majority of both students and faculty/staff/librarians. The only area of misalignment noted was information literacy (83% faculty/staff/librarians and 67% by students).

As the task force reviewed this finding, there was discussion that this result may be caused by an area where misalignment is caused by misunderstanding. Our task force posits that understanding of what information literacy *is* might be generally lower among students, and therefore less of a priority. It is clear in these data that students view many skills as essential parts of their education, and are often in very close agreement with faculty/staff/librarian perspectives.

### *High Impact Practices*

When given a list of high impact practices (HIPS) as defined by AAC&U and key experiences and asked, “What are key experiences every USF student should have? Select all that apply.” the HIPs that rose to the top were:

- Internship or field experiences (83% students, 71% faculty/staff/librarians)
- Developing skills and applying their learning outside the classroom (55% students)

Only two of the remaining categories received more than a 50% response rate, with both students and faculty/staff/librarians in alignment:

- Collaborative assignments and projects
- Service learning/community engaged learning

Interestingly, students ranked research with faculty significantly higher than faculty/staff/librarians: 46% of students felt this was an experience they should have, while only 26% of faculty/staff/librarians selected this. Another area of misalignment were first-year seminars (27% students, 40% faculty/staff/librarians).

The remaining HIPS were within 10% of each other:

- Common intellectual experiences and culminating senior project/ capstone experience (both roughly 45% response)
- Undergraduate research and study abroad (both roughly 35-40% response)
- Learning/living communities and E-portfolios (roughly 20-30%).

### *Engaging Students in Learning*

Two questions were asked in relation to student learning. The first provided a list of activities and asked, “Which of the following classroom activities best promote learning in your courses?” For students, active learning techniques generally ranked higher (discussion, problem-solving), hands-on exercises, etc. While lecture does seem to engage two-thirds of student respondents, the more ‘passive’ technique of reading only engages one-third. This is an area of significant misalignment with faculty/staff/librarians, who ranked reading 63%.

Interestingly, while students highly value teamwork as a skill, only 41% felt group work stimulated their learning, indicating that we should reframe how and why students work in teams in our courses. While faculty/staff/librarians seem to overestimate student engagement with class discussions (85% faculty/staff/librarians, 74% by students), the response rate from students was actually the highest selected, tied with problem-based learning, indicating that this is an activity that promotes learning.

Misalignment was also noted in the category of small group discussions (73% faculty/staff/librarians, 56% by students). Some qualitative data with focus groups by the Post-Pandemic Learning Faculty Learning Committee (data unpublished) indicates that this is an area where changes in classroom management would be beneficial. Students anecdotally reported small group discussions worked well when properly facilitated and managed by their instructors. Two other areas of misalignment where students valued a learning technique more than faculty were informal discussions/study groups with classmates (55% students, 43% faculty/staff/librarians), and tutoring (33% students, 15% faculty/staff/librarians). These areas of misalignment show potential for pedagogical improvement to better support student needs, while retaining the learning outcomes and standards faculty/staff/librarians value.

The final question in the survey further explored engagement in student learning, asking, “How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements about learning in the classroom?” Data for each category for those who selected ‘agree’ or ‘strongly agree’ were compiled. The findings show that students reported engagement in learning when they felt they were being challenged. In fact, students selected this response even higher ranked than faculty (84% students, 80% faculty/staff/librarians) and as the second most highly-ranked factor of the list, behind ‘being exposed to how different people see the world’.

While students do tend to feel strong connections to their fellow students and professors promote learning, faculty think this places more weight (roughly 90% faculty/staff/librarians, 70-80% students for both categories). We *underestimate* students’ desire to see the connection to their career path (71% faculty/staff/librarians, 80% students). Additionally, being exposed to how different people see the world (74% faculty/staff/librarians, 87% students) promotes engagement in learning.

The remaining choices to the question were all within 5% points for faculty/staff/librarian and student responses. These categories included that students felt engaged in learning when:

- They are understanding more about their place in the world.

- They are working in groups to solve problems, the class is organized with innovative pedagogies.
- They feel there is a link to the pursuit of social justice.

All categories received more than 60% response rate from faculty/staff/librarians as well as students, indicating that all of these factors can help create an engaging learning environment for students.

### *Recommendations*

These data indicate many areas of overlapping values, desires, and goals from students, faculty, staff, and librarians. These are areas we wish to keep, promote, or even grow. Notably, the breadth of the liberal arts education remains a shared value. Students show a strong interest in putting their learning into action: applying their skills to service, and putting theory into practice. There is strong agreement about skills students need to develop, and in particular, student respondents showed the strongest interest in working with, connecting to, and understanding others. Areas of divergence are those where we wish to be mindful about re-articulating, re-visioning, and re-examining. For example, our survey data indicate that students embrace many elements of Jesuit Values, despite not resonating with this term in the opening question. There are also certain skills and teaching practices, like information literacy and reading, whose value is not as apparent to students. These are areas of further investigation to consider as we explore how a new Core would reflect and amplify our USF values and identity.

The full Undergraduate Core Curriculum Redesign Survey's Faculty, Staff, and Student reports can be found [here](#).

## **Core Adjacent Elements**

### *Community Engaged Learning*

#### *Overview*

USF's current undergraduate Community-Engaged Learning (CEL) requirement was approved by the Provost's Council in 2017 after an extensive year-long internal and external data gathering, dissemination, and feedback process that included administrators and faculty. The subgroup that researched CEL for this core revision task force integrated existing research from the original CEL transition process with more recent data on USF's CEL courses and insights from interviews/emails with peer and aspirational CEL institutions.

Peer and aspirational institutions shared practices, structures, and frameworks that are well-aligned with USF's current CEL model, though there were a few aspirational elements worth exploring. Our current CEL framework reflects best practices, current scholarship, and responsiveness to data on student and community outcomes. Overall, our subgroup asserts that USF's CEL requirement is a strength to be celebrated and enhanced within the new core curriculum. Our recommendations are to more intentionally integrate CEL courses into all departments/majors, more explicitly link CEL to transferrable professional skills development,

and increase support for faculty to integrate CEL meaningfully into their teaching commitments and manage the logistical elements unique to CEL.

In essence, we assert the following observations about CEL at USF:

1. For many faculty, particularly those who believe that higher education should advance the public good, CEL is *the central* work that fulfills their professional and civic goals;
2. For students, CEL is like the “spinach in the smoothie,” meaning it provides them with essential experiences and learning opportunities that build their capacities as scholars, professionals, and citizens (even if they don’t necessarily recognize it). This latter point is one that the new core curriculum might want to address, since it encourages learners to take an intentional “want to”, rather than “have to” attitude as they determine when and where to address this university requirement.

### *Data Collection Process*

We implemented a three-pronged data collection process to inform our examination of the CEL requirement. We relied on data provided through Tableau about the number of students enrolled in CEL courses, ratio of FT to PT faculty teaching CEL courses, and number of sections provided. In the past academic year, USF offered approximately 150 sections of CEL courses across multiple departments, serving about 2,100 students. Some of these courses double count for core requirements, the CD requirement, or major requirements. About half of these courses are taught by full-time faculty.

The group also researched peer and aspirational CEL initiatives at the following institutions: Loyola Chicago, Santa Clara University, Tulane University, and Cal State Monterey Bay. We gathered data from their extensive website content and through interviews and email exchanges. Much of what was shared aligned with our current practices, with two notable elements: CSUMB requires two SL (CEL) courses, including a general lower division course focused on civic engagement and an upper division course that’s more specific to students’ majors and professional pathways. Loyola Chicago offered a broader experiential requirement that included CEL as one option alongside internships and student research/creative projects. This institution uses ePortfolios to assess student learning from these distinctive experiences.

The third component of our research was a review of the core survey reports on student, faculty, and staff responses. In almost all sections of the elements of our survey, we find students valuing dynamics that are foregrounded and given a curricular home through CEL at USF. We want to briefly highlight data points that indicate that CEL may be a space for what students find most important in their USF education.

Responding to the question “What are the key experiences that every USF student should have? (High Impact Practices)”, “Service Learning/Community Engaged Learning” was the second most important to students at 55%. But it is also implicitly (because of the design of CEL at USF) connected to the most important element for students: “Internship or Field Experience” at 83%. We should lean into this High Impact Practice, making it more “front and center” for

prospective students and, wherever possible, integrating CEL more deeply into departments through internships and field experiences.

### *Findings and Recommendations*

- CEL at USF has been recently redeveloped (from the former Service Learning/SL requirement) through a process that brought in stakeholders, evaluated peers, and drew on contemporary scholarship. The CEL requirement is currently overseen by the CEL Review Committee, so any updates or revisions to this requirement should include this body's input and guidance.
- CEL is both deeply mission aligned and valued by many students and faculty. It is a signature experience of studying and working at USF, so it should be sustained and strengthened. For those who do not see the value, USF should invest in enhancing communications about the value of CEL and providing more explicit professional development for faculty, and instruction for students, to ensure they understand the scholarly, professional, and civic learning outcomes. An emphasis on professional and transferable practice skills gained from working both in and with community would benefit students AND faculty, making the process of reimagining how to integrate CEL into course design easier from both perspectives.
- This is an opportunity for rearticulation in student-facing terms, and for integrating more deeply into the departments through internships and field experiences. Across all majors, departments, and undergraduate-serving schools (CAS, SOM, and SONHP), students are seeking opportunities for experiential learning that develop their professional and academic competencies. CEL experiences, ranging from individual service activities to group projects, to more intensive internships/fieldwork provide these opportunities while also aligning with USF's social justice values and mission to "change the world from here." Thus, we recommend more thoughtfully and thoroughly integrating CEL into all departments, programs, and majors to guide students in synthesizing their disciplinary learning into professional development and action for the public good.
- CEL, because of its engagement with community partners, may be a part of the core where we can be intentional about sequencing, inviting juniors and seniors to put their growing disciplinary knowledge into action.
- Opportunities for communicating the value/meaning to faculty.
  - Redesign and integration of CEL into core curricula across schools will require enhanced resources and support for faculty to encourage critical thinking about ways to incorporate a greater than "content delivery" focus among faculty.
- Given the ways the CEL is so aligned with HIPs, this could be part of the "calling card" for USF Education, a way to foreground what is important/distinctive for USF core.

### *Cultural Diversity*

#### *Overview*

The task force examined data on every single course that had been offered at USF with the designation of Cultural Diversity. Over the past five years, USF has offered between 70 and 90 courses with the cultural diversity designation every semester. This compares to most core

areas that offer 20-25 courses a semester. However, a cursory glance at the schedule reveals that not all courses that focus upon diversity have applied for the designation. This suggests to us that the designation itself is not a significant draw for students, nor is there a perceived shortfall of courses. These assumptions are borne out by the data.

There are very few stand alone CD courses, it does seem to have been folded into the curriculum in the Arts, Social Sciences and Humanities, and to a lesser extent to the Sciences and the School of Management as well. We would not anticipate significant backsliding should this specific designation disappear in CAS, though further review would need to take place in the other two schools.

### *Findings and Recommendations*

Based on the review of CD data, the task force recommends that it remains important to signal to prospective and current students that we care about diversity. It's worthwhile to further examine how universities have distributed the study of human diversity by looking at course requirements focused on the U.S. context, as opposed to courses that paired topics such as justice and/or equality or courses labeled "Global Cultures and Traditions".

One approach to consider is a distribution requirement that combines diversity with current issues, a model that requires breadth in relation to a student's chosen major. For example, someone who is majoring in the sciences would be required to take one course in "Global Issues in Arts and Humanities" and one course in "Global Issues in the Social Sciences." A student majoring in a humanities field would take "Global Issues in Social Sciences" and "Global Issues in the Sciences". This would require multiple departments to submit courses that would fulfill the outcomes for this requirement, by combining a focus on diversity, current affairs, and a breadth requirement simultaneously.

### *Foreign Language*

#### *Overview*

At USF, the language requirement is as follows:

- College of Arts and Sciences students
  - Bachelor of Arts (BA) degree: three semesters of a foreign language (FL3)
  - Bachelor of Sciences (BS) degree: two semesters of a foreign language (FL2)
- School of Nursing and Health Professions
  - No language requirement
- School of Management
  - No language requirement with the exception of International Business majors that require three semesters of a foreign language (FL3).

This initial review of USF's language requirement led to inquiring about whether other colleges and universities also require a language requirement similar to USF. Additionally, the task force wanted to understand how many language waivers were granted at USF (due to placement

testing and those already fluent in a secondary language) as well as what the enrollments were for language classes during the past 5 years.

#### *Data Collection Process*

The Office of Institutional Research and Analytics (formerly CIPE) provided data on how many language waivers were granted between Fall 2017 - Spring 2024, and the population of students who applied for language waivers. Additional calculations based on enrollments of language classes (second semester and third semester) between Fall 2017 - Spring 2024 were conducted to see how they compared against the numbers of language waivers that were granted.

#### *Findings and Recommendations*

Between Fall 2017 - Spring 2024, a total of 1,143 language waivers were granted. These waivers were based on placement testing and students who are bilingual in another language besides English. The total number of language waivers for

- BA Arts Majors (FL3) = 540
- BS Sciences Majors (FL2) = 460
- BSBA BNTL (International Business Majors) (FL3) = 142
- BSN Nursing Majors = 1 student received a waiver during the last 5 years despite the degree not having language requirements.

Please note that Spring 2024 is still in progress as there were only 11 waivers out of the 1,143 that were processed between January-February.

Between Fall 2017 - Spring 2024, the total enrollment in language classes that counted for second semester language (FL2) was 4,619. The total enrollment in language classes that counted for third semester language (FL3) was 3,040. Thus, it is clear that there is still a large number of students taking language classes to fulfill their foreign language requirement.

Upon examining language requirements at other colleges and universities, there were very few that did not have a language requirement. Institutions that do not have a language requirement are as follows:

- Amherst College (open curriculum, no GEC's)
- Brown University (open curriculum)
- Loyola Marymount University (only their Honors program has a language requirement)
- Evergreen State College (no majors, just pre-designed pathways or an area of emphasis in the students' studies, no GEC's)
- Babson College
- University of Rochester

Many schools remain similar to USF around language requirements with requirements based on a student's major. It was common to see Business, Nursing, and Engineering majors not having a language requirement while other students in the College of Arts and Sciences having a language requirement.



Based on this initial review, most schools like USF recognize the importance for students to study a secondary language. It allows students to appreciate and better understand cultures, perspectives, and values from other countries. By acquiring intercultural competence and language skills, students will be able to respect and communicate with others whose cultures are different. These are essential in today's globalized world. By completing the language requirement, USF students gain a higher appreciation and respect for cultures that are different from their own, be able to increase their number of job opportunities in the U.S. and abroad, study abroad more comfortably in many of our partner institutions and immersion programs, and learn and enhance new skills.

While the task force engaged in this initial review of language requirements, the group continues to view language requirements as valuable for students. USF is located in San Francisco, one of the most diverse and international cities in the world. Offering students the opportunity to practice and apply their language skills in so many parts of our city is a benefit to students' learning.

## **Community Engagement**

In this discovery phase of the CRTF, there were several community engagement opportunities throughout the year. In the fall semester, the Provost hosted a Chat and Chai event in November on the Undergraduate Core Curriculum Redesign. In the spring semester, the CRTF hosted several opportunities to share the work of the task force and findings of the Core Curriculum Redesign Survey. The Undergraduate Core Curriculum Task Force Window and Mirror Findings presentation was held on February 26 via zoom and was well attended. The task force held two Undergraduate Core Curriculum Task Force Survey presentations on April 2 and 3 to share the high-level findings from the faculty, staff, and student survey that was administered earlier in the semester.

- [Chat and Chai Undergraduate Core Curriculum Redesign Deck](#)
- [Core Curriculum Task Force Window and Mirror Findings Presentation Deck](#)
- [Core Curriculum Task Force Window and Mirror Findings Presentation Recording](#)
- [Core Curriculum Task Force Survey Presentation Deck](#)
- [Core Curriculum Task Force Survey Presentation Recording](#)

The Core Redesign Advisory Group, in collaboration with the Core Redesign Task Force and Provost's Office, also organized three Core Redesign Listening Sessions in spring 2024 to help support the Core Redesign process. Open to members of the entire USF community, these listening sessions took place on March 25, 2024 (virtual only), March 27, 2024 (in person only in McLaren 250), and April 16, 2024 (virtual only). The primary goals of these sessions were to gather, organize, and communicate community perspectives on key questions related to the core redesign process to the Core Redesign Task Force and Provost's Office, and to support community trust- and confidence-building efforts in the Core Redesign process. Further

community feedback was also invited during these sessions through an anonymous [Qualtrics survey](#), produced and disseminated by the Provost's Office, with the resulting data to be shared with both the Core Redesign Task Force and the Core Redesign Advisory Group. Community feedback offered in both the Community Listening Sessions and the Qualtrics survey will be incorporated in the Core Advisory Group's final report and recommendations.

## Recommendations

- a. **How we talk about the core matters.** Articulating to students and their families the value of liberal arts education and core curriculum experience, and skills gained from courses, and gaining buy-in from faculty and staff is critical to a redesigned core curriculum.
- b. **Intentional design for experiential learning.** Students are eager to connect their classes to communities. Redesigning and highlighting where these experiences happen in the core providing support for the development of high-impact experiential learning.
- c. **Ensure the core is transfer student friendly.** Be mindful about credit creep. In a core redesign, consider how core courses can be completed in the major, looking for ways to knit core and major completion together, and creating opportunities pathways for maximizing application of course credit to degree requirements.
- d. **Foreground Jesuit education.** The Jesuit identity and genealogy of our liberal arts education is lost in translation to our students (according to our student survey). One important goal of the redesign process would be to foreground focused messaging on the Jesuit identity of our core, our collective purpose, and in the redesign of courses. This may require some pedagogical training and awareness-raising among our faculty, but this will be necessary for a successful roll out of a redesigned core.
- e. **Who is delivering the core.** The redesign process needs to take faculty capacity into consideration as data showed part-time faculty are teaching large sections of the core (60-70% of the classes in Philosophy, Ethics, Visual and Performing Arts and Rhetoric). This is a horizon that should be explicitly considered in re-structuring the core, with consideration of how more full-time faculty can be more engaged in the core.
- f. **Student needs.** It's critical to pay attention to students' interests and needs around preparing for their future careers and calling. Students are interested in novel pedagogy with more digital fluency emphasis. Thus far, faculty involved in core redesign have been focusing upon content of core classes, but students express interest in skills and competencies that are developed in core class offerings.