

In Attendance

- Sharon Beckman (Chair)
- Tom Chiles
- Akua Sarr
- Joe Du Pont
- Stacy Grooters (virtual)
- Kelby Bibler
- John Mahoney
- Yonder Gillihan (virtual)
- Gilda Morelli
- Monica O'Reilly-Jacob
- Tom Wall
- Andrew Davis
- Diane Ring
- Jean-Baptiste Tristan
- Tracy Regan
- Julia Spagnola (UGBC)
- Billy Soo
- David Quigley
- Joe Carroll
- Kate Gregory
- Sasha Tomic
- Kirsten Davison
- David Scanlon
- Tom Kohler
- Cathy Mooney (for Angela Harkins)
- Welkin Johnson (for Anthony Annunziato)
- Brian Gareau (guest)
- Elizabeth Shalala (guest)
- Adam Krueckeberg (scribe)

Unable to attend:

- Fr. Greg Kalscheur, SJ
- Mary Ellen Carter
- Anthony Annunziato
- Jonathan Laurence
- Karen Lyons
- Ronnie Sadka
- Michelle Elias-Bloomer
- Angela Harkins

Approval of Minutes

- The minutes from the October 14 meeting were unanimously approved.

Presentation: Core Renewal (Brian Gareau, Elizabeth Shalala)

- Core renewal has been a significant, multi-year project which culminated in a public launch in 2015. Following significant community discussion and deliberation, the University's intentions were crystalized in the document "Towards a Renewed Core" (2013). This was followed by the 2014 "The Vision Animating the Boston College Curriculum" – both documents are available on the [Core Curriculum website](#). Many BC community members were involved; with assistance from Continuum Innovation, they articulated a philosophy which grounds the Core Curriculum in the Catholic, Jesuit heritage and charism of the University.

- The project was undertaken in response to a perception among students, faculty, and University leadership that the Core needed to be refreshed so as to serve better as the centerpiece of our educational philosophy as well as the element that sets BC off from other schools in the minds of prospective students. We created two new types of courses intended to be exciting, reflective, and action-oriented: Complex Problems (CP) and Enduring Questions (EQ).
 - Complex Problems courses are co-taught by faculty from two disciplines who share the lecture (a unique element). There is a weekly problem-based, action-oriented lab led by a third instructor—generally a post-doc Core Fellow—as well as a weekly reflection section to allow students time to gather and reflect on how the course material intersects with what they’re learning in other courses, in their extracurricular activities, and in the rest of their lives. These are large lecture courses (typically 76 students) which are broken into four 19-person sections for lab and reflection.
 - Enduring Questions are smaller (typically 19 students) pairs of linked courses connected by a single question that is approached from two different disciplinary perspectives. Like CP, EQ courses are co-developed by two instructors, but are taught separately.
- The CP/EQ approach has been a tremendous success – the courses continue to fill to capacity even though the total number of seats has increased to over 1,000 per semester.
- Faculty are offered a stipend to develop new CP/EQ courses, but they typically enjoy the experience and come back to teach these types of courses again and again.
- A critical element of the program’s success has been the creation of a curricular oversight body – the University Core Renewal Committee (UCRC). This group, consisting of faculty, academic administrators, and a student, selects and approves applications for new CP/EQ courses and then guides their creation. The group also provides oversight for all courses that meet one or more of the BC Core requirements. The course design & review process is very rigorous and requires a serious commitment, with multiple 2-hour meetings and workshops over an 18-month period. The committee looks for engagement with both departmental learning goals as well as the broader goals outlined in the Vision statement. This ensures that all core courses contribute to the renewed vision established for the Core in 2014.
- Assessment is a key component of the approach: the UCRC has a sub-committee dedicated to establishing rubrics by which it may directly assess student work across courses to ensure that learning goals are being met, and help to advise faculty on how to improve pedagogy in pursuit of those goals. This form of assessment is grounded in the course design process through the intentional creation of assignments intended to demonstrate key learning outcomes under the guidance of the UCRC. The Associate Dean reviewed the assessment rubric, which was developed over a five-year period, and which is constantly being updated and strengthened. We’re happy to say that most students meet the benchmark of looking at problems and questions through multiple disciplinary lenses.
- The Cultural Diversity (CD) Core Requirement has received particular attention, as it had not been renewed since 1991. Two sets of learning goals were established based on many hours of discussion with departments, faculty, and the Jesuit community – Engaging Difference and Justice; and Difference, Justice, and the Common Good in the US. Over 100 courses now incorporate these learning outcomes – in some cases, existing courses were modified to integrate these concepts; in others, new courses have been developed around these ideals. These new pathways are in addition to the traditional Cultural Diversity options. Some of these

are the new CP / EQ courses – BC now has some courses that meet the CD requirement as well as up to two others, giving students a lot of flexibility in their course planning.

- The UCRC partners with many others across campus to fulfill its distinct mission:
 - Admissions – Core is a major part of our distinctiveness and is attractive to many prospective students.
 - Academic advising – in addition to helping advisors understand the changing courses, advising is a key channel to inform students about Core offerings.
 - CTE has helped design a set of (required) workshops for faculty interested in developing and producing a CP or EQ course.
 - FYE – Core is very involved in putting together the program to ensure that all incoming students are aware of both the requirements and the options to fulfill them.
 - University Communications – the Core provides content for BC marketing efforts.
 - Advancement – the Core is also of central interest to the many friends and benefactors of Boston College.
 - Office of Global Engagement (OGE) – the Core office is engaged in an ongoing dialogue with the OGE and students to ensure that courses taken abroad that students want to count for the core are appropriate; we have a general position that courses intended to fulfill University requirements should be taken at Boston College, given the distinctive nature of our approach.
 - University Committee on Learning Outcomes (currently contributing to the NECHE interim report)
 - Formative Education – there is a natural connection between the Core and BC’s philosophy of forming the whole student
 - Deans of all the schools and chairs of all MCAS departments – for example, we are currently working to integrate more professional school faculty into the teaching cohort for Core classes, even if the courses they teach end up being offered through MCAS departments. We have seen fantastic collaborations between MCAS and non-MCAS faculty.
 - Academic Officers Council
 - The Career Center
 - University Mission & Ministry
 - The Undergraduate Student Government
 - Student Services – the Core office works very closely with the Registrar’s office to schedule courses and classrooms, and strives to ensure that students can easily find and sign up for Core courses.
- The UCRC also engages at the departmental level, offering a formal process to assist departments that wish to update or renew their core offerings (outside the CP/EQ arena). Theology and History are two recent examples which made clear both the value of having a trusted partner assisting with the process, and the insights that faculty who have designed and taught CP/EQ courses can bring to the design of “regular” core courses as well.
- Brian reviewed data provided to the Council, including data around growth of courses, faculty, and total seats provided in CP and EQ courses and how they fulfill BC core requirements. He noted that school and departmental participation is variable – very strong in some areas but a potential growth opportunity in others. He also noted that this growth has not negatively

impacted other distinctive programs (Perspectives, Courage to Know, etc.) which remain strong and popular with students.

- Brian spoke about the Core Fellows Program which, as far as we know, is the only program in the US that invites a large (eight) cohort of visiting assistant professors to campus and assigns them to teach in the general education / Core area. Instructors are invited to teach for up to three years, and they lead the lab portion of CP courses, often develop their own EQ course(s) (in conjunction with another Core Fellow or a full-time BC instructor), and are also given time and resources to develop their own research. We provide a ton of support, from engagement with the CTE and job talks to retreats and research support to help these individuals move forward in their own careers. They often incorporate students into their research as well. These Fellows typically go on to be very successful, including two who are helping anchor the new Human Centered Engineering program here at BC. As they move out to other places, the BC philosophy is being spread to other Universities.
- The Pod Leadership program was also introduced as part of the renewal process. This was an outcome of working closely with UM&M to design reflection processes that are meaningful, effective, and rooted in the charism of the University. The Pod program takes a “near peer” approach, in which upper-class students are selected to facilitate these reflective conversations. This is a lot of work for the faculty, but has been shown to be very effective in developing leaders as well as providing upper-class mentors for incoming students.
- The materials shared provide additional detail on three interdisciplinary projects illustrative of the Core philosophy:
 - Making the Modern World: Design, Ethics, and Engineering
 - Understanding and Protecting our Oceans in the Wake of Climate Change
 - Building and Sustaining a Habitable Planet: Origins and Evolutions of the Earth, Theological and Geoscience Perspectives
- Future prospects – the Core office is working on a number of future initiatives:
 - Continuing to renew existing core courses in numerous departments
 - Assisting with the development of a renewed Capstone experience
 - Rollout of a new living / learning community (LLC), which is ready to be taken beyond the pilot stage. Funded by a formative education grant, the Justice & the Common Good LLC has been very successful.
- Questions from the PAC:
 - Tom C – I’m struck by the low representation of STEM departments (other than biology) in the CP/EQ courses. Do we know why? How do we increase participation? Brian – there are a number of reasons, including the size of the available faculty and the intensity of their commitments to their own students and research. We’ve never put any pressure on departments to participate - perhaps we need to take a more partnering approach with specific departments or professional schools to encourage greater participation?
 - Tracy – I’ve had a wonderful experience teaching with a law professor, but have noticed that all the Econ faculty who have taught CP/EQ have been Professors of the Practice – there are a lot of competing priorities for tenure-line faculty, and department chairs may make committing to CP/EQ difficult if they need these faculty teaching “regular” courses. Additionally, CP/EQ courses are a lot

of extra work compared to a “normal” class, especially because of the evening schedules - getting departments to offer course release to spend time developing courses, and recognizing the extra effort involved could be important.

- Welkin – have many STEM courses incorporated the cultural diversity learning outcomes? Brian – it’s been done, but only in a limited way – we’d love to see more here. We need to get the word out that this can be a segment of the course, and does not necessarily have to be the central focus.
- Gilda – faculty and students outside of MCAS should continue to really be included in this process – there’s still a strong feeling that this is an MCAS program, and those outside of MCAS are sometimes made to feel “othered”. Students in professional schools have even more need for this kind of engagement than many MCAS students do, given the roles they will play in society after graduation. Brian – yes, this has been an issue – we’ve been working to strengthen the message that this is “the University’s curriculum”, but we have a way to go, this is a significant cultural shift with deep historical roots.
- Kirsten – has there been collaboration across Jesuit universities on the Core? Brian – yes, there’s been some: for example, we’ve presented to SLU, but doing these kinds of courses is expensive, and many other Jesuit schools are more resource constrained than we are. Other schools have also been pressured to *reduce* the size of their Cores to provide more options for students, whereas we’ve been blessed to be able to take a different direction. Elizabeth – we did reach out to other schools as we developed our Living and Learning community approach, but our approach ended up growing out of the BC charism rather than being modeled on another school’s methods.
- Tom K – I’ve been involved in Perspectives for more than 30 years – it’s amazing, but is the most demanding thing I’ve ever done. It’s so interdisciplinary; working with another faculty member requires a lot of work over the summer, as well as every weekend (it’s like going back to school) to get and stay on the same page. Requires an enormous amount of dedication – it’s worth it, but trying to give time to people to do it is a real challenge. Technologically, my courses are supposed to be cross-listed into Theology and Philosophy, but that’s been hit-or-miss; we need to get better at the technology and blocking-and-tackling.
- Julia – a lot of recent questions at UGBC have been centered on student interest in the Core and specifically the Cultural Diversity requirement. 1) how do we make the new pathways known / better advertised to students? 2) is there a way to make some of the CP and EQ courses available to transfer students who struggle to understand the Core? Brian – yes, we’re making CP & EQ available to transfer students in the spring, and will save some seats for them. We’re also starting to pilot allowing some upper-class students into these classes. We are also looking at some different ways to get the word out – we advertise through the Heights and the Gavel, through schools, etc.
 - Tracy – consider if you’re piloting upper-class students, that first-years see this as a formative experience just for them, and introducing upper class students would change that dynamic. We might look at courses that are outside the CP /

EQ model, but includes some of the same pedagogical elements. Might consider a hybrid between CP and EQ

- Jean-Baptiste – if I have an idea and want a partner, how do I get started? Brian – we provide the equivalent of “intellectual matchmaking” – we’ll help you identify the partner and will make the connection for you.
- Yonder shared how much the Theology has benefited from engagement with the Core renewal process.
- Stacy noted that the partnership with the Core has been important to the CTE’s development as well, particularly how working with CP/EQ faculty has driven a deeper understanding of pedagogy generally across the University.
- David spoke to how critical the leadership provided by Brian and Elizabeth has been. Our current model promotes an ongoing process of renewal, not a project that started and ends, which is key. The engagement of faculty with these deep questions has been a great surprise and delight – the willingness of faculty to come back and teach again and again speaks to how meaningful they’ve found it. David asked that all members of the Council please consider Brian’s offer to bring this spirit of renewal into specific departments and schools. This philosophy and these design features have positively influenced many different areas – Human-centered Engineering, Public Health for the Common Good, and others.

Provost’s Report

- The interim review by NECHE is coming up quickly – we are in the process of submitting our documentation. This is a reminder that we continue the ongoing work of assessment in all areas.
- Very encouraging news on hiring – we have one dean search (Law) which is going well; on the faculty front, we have authorized over 50 new searches. We have a first wave of acceptances – 11 new colleagues, a very strong and diverse group.
- We are in the final stages of working through the FY23 budgeting process. We’ll review financials in the February PAC meeting.
- BC continues to be very attractive to prospective students: the relative success we’ve had over the past few years is paying off with record numbers of applicants at all levels, including a much larger ED1 class than last year (decisions for which are expected to go out tonight). Our Questbridge partnership was stronger last year than expected, and will grow this year from 50 to 75 new students. Applications appear to be trending upwards in most graduate programs as well.
- 245 Beacon Street is nearly open and is being prepared for occupancy. Computer Science, Engineering, the Schiller Institute, and the Shea Center will be moving in soon, the Café will be open, and the building will transform the campus in many ways. We expect a grand celebration in later spring, but the PAC will schedule a tour with Tom C. during December study days.
- Eagle Apps remains in the process of implementation – spring registration presented some specific challenges, but was less daunting than the fall, and we were able to get through both registration and billing with the largest set of students in the University’s history. We’re continuing to work on stabilization, fixing critical issues with grading, graduation, and reporting,

and are building out additional staff with support from the Board of Trustees. We understand that challenges remain, but are hopeful that things will be much better in 2022.

- There will universal arrival COVID testing in the spring, as has been the case for the past few terms, with announcements in early January. We have not yet determined how much testing there will be throughout that semester.
 - Monica – are we requiring boosters? David – we are in conversation on this topic, and have been pleased that we've been able to run such successful booster clinics. Welkin – please spread the word about the clinics. For new admits (or readmits) we're following the same set of requirements as in the fall, including a 12/17 deadline for exemption requests.

In closing, Sharon thanked the members of the Council and reminded everyone that PAC members are welcome to provide suggestions for future PAC topics.