

Harvey Mudd College
Core Review Planning Faculty Meeting
Noon to 1:00 pm, November 30, 2017
Green Room, Platt Campus Center

Core Curriculum Director, T. Donnelly, welcomed everyone to the meeting, explaining that there would be a presentation of the draft goals for the Core that incorporated the feedback from the last meeting. He then introduced Core Review Planning Team (CRPT) member R. Libeskind-Hadas who explained that the CRPT wanted to hear feedback from the faculty on this iteration of the Core goals. On December 7, 2017 the faculty will be asked to approve a final version. He noted that an explicit articulation of the purpose of the Core would help to tell outside people about us and give us a touchstone to judge how well any given Core is doing. Having an explicit goal statement for the Core will also help us in our January 19 and 20, 2018 strategic planning and design session on constraints and implementation guidelines for the Core that will be facilitated by Drs. Cassandra Horii and Jenn Weaver from the Caltech Center for Teaching, Learning, & Outreach.

R. Libeskind-Hadas reminded his colleagues that this version of the Core goals was informed by surveys of faculty, staff, students, and alumni; a questionnaire administered to departments; the series of faculty and community meetings held this fall; various presentations to alumni and trustees; and the feedback received on the Core goals statement draft that was presented on November 9, 2017.

He recalled that a Core review team visited the College from November 13 to 15. Their mandate was to examine the implementation of the current Core and not to articulate a mission for the Core nor propose a new Core. Their report is expected in mid-December and will help inform discussions at the January session.

R. Libeskind-Hadas recalled that the previous Core values draft contained both a high-level statement of learning goals and a bulleted list of guiding principles, but that based on feedback heard on November 9, the CRPT decided to split them. The statement of high-level learning goals will be considered today while constraints and implementation guidelines will be considered in January.

He then displayed the current draft statement of goals of the Core curriculum:

The Core Curriculum at Harvey Mudd College seeks to nurture students' intellectual curiosity and joy of learning, provide them with foundational knowledge and skills needed for advanced study in STEM disciplines, and begin a critical engagement with the

humanities, social sciences, and the arts. In keeping with HMC's STEM-focused approach to liberal arts education, the Core introduces students to thinking critically about consequential problems and complex issues, making connections across disciplinary boundaries, communicating and collaborating effectively, and understanding how their personal and professional actions impact the world around them.

R. Libeskind-Hadas displayed a slide of proposed constraints and implementation guidelines and explained that it would serve as a springboard to the January discussions. The font was small and he told the faculty that he did not expect them to be able to read it. It is reproduced here for the record:

Proposed constraints:

- (i) The Core Curriculum at Harvey Mudd College is jointly owned and governed by all departments.
- (ii) In service to achieving excellence in reaching our Core goals, the curriculum is equitable and inclusive, recognizing that students enter our college with different barriers and opportunities for education, leadership, and wellness;
- (iii) The Core observes a workload that provides students with time for activities and obligations other than coursework.
- (iv) Within the context of joint ownership and governance, the Core allows each department the flexibility to present a set of major ideas and methods from its discipline in addition to contributing to a set of foundations that form common expectations for the core.
- (v) All departments have at least one course in the Core.
- (vi) Any revision of the Core will be implemented coincident with the allocation of appropriate resources.

Proposed implementation guidelines:

- (vii) The Core provides flexible pathways for all HMC students in order to accommodate differences in background and preparation.
- (viii) The 128-unit graduation requirement is reduced to allow more flexibility throughout a student's time at the college, including while in the Core.
- (ix) The entire first year is pass-fail.
- (x) Some Core-course requirements can be completed before graduation instead of before the end of the 3rd semester.

He then displayed a slide showing just the first two constraints in a font large enough to be read by all. He noted that while the constraints and guidelines were not the topic of discussion at this meeting, the CRPT wanted to share them so that faculty members would know that they were

being collected and would be brought back for further discussion in January. He noted that the full list was generated from themes heard throughout the fall and was not meant to be a complete list. Items can still be added or subtracted and there will be additional feedback from the external review report in mid-December.

R. Libeskind-Hadas then displayed a slide showing the changes from the previous version in green type. He explained that the changes were intended to identify what is in the Core, versus what is expected for the degree and to strip out the guiding principles for now. He noted that the CRPT recognizes that it's probably not possible to have a single statement that everyone loves, but asked to what extent this version captures the sentiments and ideas that faculty members have heard. He added that if anyone had concerns that are sufficiently significant that they would rise to the level of an amendment when we vote next week, the CRPT would be eager to hear their thoughts now so that it could determine whether it needs to make changes before bringing this back to the faculty on December 7. He then noted that there is no assumption at this point that the Core will change as change is not in the mandate of the CRPT.

Paper copies of both the previous and current versions of the statement of goals were distributed.

The draft from the 11/9/17 faculty meeting appears here:

The Core Curriculum at Harvey Mudd College seeks to nurture students' intellectual curiosity and joy of learning, and provide them with foundational knowledge and skills needed for advanced study in STEM disciplines, and for critical engagement with the humanities, social sciences, and the arts. In keeping with HMC's STEM-focused approach to liberal arts education, students are expected to think critically about consequential problems and complex issues, to make connections across disciplinary boundaries, to communicate and collaborate effectively, and to understand how their personal and professional actions impact the world around them.

In support of these educational goals, the Core Curriculum is designed to:

- Be equitable and inclusive, recognizing that students enter our college with different barriers and opportunities for education, leadership, and wellness;
- Provide flexible pathways for all HMC students in order to accommodate differences in background and preparation;
- Observe a workload that provides students with time for activities and obligations other than coursework;

- Allow each department autonomy to present a set of major ideas and methods from its discipline in addition to contributing to a set of foundations that form common expectations for the core.

The current draft appears here:

The Core Curriculum at Harvey Mudd College seeks to nurture students' intellectual curiosity and joy of learning, provide them with foundational knowledge and skills needed for advanced study in STEM disciplines, and begin a critical engagement with the humanities, social sciences, and the arts. In keeping with HMC's STEM-focused approach to liberal arts education, the Core introduces students to thinking critically about consequential problems and complex issues, making connections across disciplinary boundaries, communicating and collaborating effectively, and understanding how their personal and professional actions impact the world around them.

Faculty members were given some time to read the handouts and then asked "to what extent does the new version capture your sense of the values we have been talking about?" and the floor was opened for comments and questions.

It was noted that the use of the word "introduce" implies that students have no knowledge of the subjects when they arrive here.

T. Donnelly observed that the word "introduced" was added in response to feedback heard previously that the CRPT should acknowledge that the Core is not the whole educational experience.

Another faculty member observed that there was not a lot of difference between the current and proposed statements and that we are still proposing to do the same things that brought to us the problems we have now. This person observed that we can't do everything and suggested that some goals be eliminated.

It was observed that "for advanced study" may indicate more depth than is needed. It was suggested that "advanced" be replaced with "further," and observed that the foundational knowledge and skills might also prepare people for life. This person suggested stressing general fluency in STEM.

It was asked how the existing Core measured up to the proposed statement which seems to call for more than our current Core delivers.

It was observed that the first sentence of the proposed statement would apply to all majors and not just STEM majors.

CRPT member N. Lape explained that there is a difference between goals and constraints. We expect constraints while goals are what we want them to have at the end. She noted that exposing students to all of the HMC disciplines is currently expressed as a constraint but could also be expressed as a goal. She added that not every course in the Core will address all of the goals listed in the statement.

Someone asked "what is the goal for a statement of goals?" Is it to be inspirational or a standard to which we are going to hold ourselves?

R. Libeskind-Hadas replied that the goal for the statement was that it be both aspirational and inspirational and provide guidance to future redesigns.

Director of Institutional Research and Effectiveness and CRPT member L. Palucki Blake asserted that every program should know where it is coming from and what it is trying to accomplish. This statement says what we want students to have gained from going through the Core. It consists of broad parameters that signal to students what they should expect to take away and to state our own commitment to helping them get those things.

A faculty member asserted that we should only list goals if we are willing to work towards them. R. Libeskind-Hadas agreed.

Another faculty member tried to put himself in the position of a student reading this. He said that he found it to be very broad and open to multiple interpretations and then observed that, as a STEM person, he preferred concrete and unambiguous things. He was answered by a colleague who observed that cognitive discomfort is necessary for growth.

It was observed that if the things in the first sentence are being done well, one would start to do the things in the second. The observer did not want to be accountable for the second sentence and proposed striking it. R. Libeskind-Hadas asked this faculty member if the discomfort were about his courses or the Core as a whole. The faculty member explained that he was struggling enough to convey the content of his courses and said that the things in the second sentence are more likely to happen in the courses that follow the Core. He divided the curriculum into the Core, the transitional courses, and the major programs and said that he wanted to see one grand statement saying that this is what happens in the Core, this is what happens in the transition courses, and this is the major part. He said that the proposed statement sounds like the whole

Mission is being crammed into the Core. He said that while he likes the first half, he is nervous about the second.

CRPT member E. Dyson said that she would also like to see it all but did not want to write it all at this point. She noted that HSA010 addresses things contained in the second half of the statement. She noted that one assignment she has given in HSA010 is to have students write a paper considering whether or not HMC is a liberal arts college and when they say yes, they say it is not from HSA but other courses. She said that the second part seemed more concrete to her than the first.

R. Libeskind-Hadas explained that the CRPT's intent for the second half was to give exposure to this list of things--to have students touch them while they are in the Core.

It was observed that the statement appears to have been written by a committee and noted that many other institutions have cores. It was asked if this prose could also describe their programs and suggested that if it could, it is not really descriptive of what we do.

A faculty member recalled that we divide our curriculum into the Core, HSA, and major components. He asserted that the things expressed in the second half of the statement address the Mission Statement but that he was not sure where they belong in the three components. He asked if we wanted to create a fourth component or carefully reallocate these things to the other three. A senior faculty member recalled that when he arrived, he took his role to be to give students skills, but now we have expanded beyond just technical knowhow and the challenge is to go beyond the disciplinary content.

A faculty member spoke in favor of keeping the entire Mission statement in the Core because the Core is something the faculty own collectively and represents the foundational identity of the curriculum.

Another faculty member observed that some departments have room for things other than disciplinary content while her department did not. She observed that she would love to have the space to explore more than content.

An FEC member cautioned against letting the perfect be the enemy of the good and observed that this statement could always be amended at a later date.

It was asked if the external report would address address this. The answer was that the external report would be a reflection of the current Core.

It was observed that the current Core addresses a lot of these things and noted that if we use this as a road map to construct a new Core we may end up right where we are now.

E. Dyson noted that the proposed statement is a simplification containing only three of the seven goals identified in the survey. It does not include "learning a little bit about a wide range of STEM disciplines," "discover intellectual and technical capability," "work efficiently and productively," or "choose a major."

It does cover "inspiring a sense of curiosity and excitement," "building interdisciplinary facility," and providing a "technical toolkit."

R. Libeskind-Hadas reminded people that this was one piece of input into the January design discussions and that other guidelines and constraints would also be discussed then.

A faculty member observed that we have been thinking about workload and identity and said that they were not addressed in this statement. He asked how we are helping students to develop their sense of identity and asserted that nothing in this statement addresses that. R. Libeskind-Hadas said that the CRPT had discussed that a lot and decided that it should be moved to the guiding principles and constraints statement.

It was suggested that the second sentence of the proposed statement be viewed as an end goal.

R. Libeskind-Hadas observed that time was up and asked his colleagues to please email any further comments to any CRPT member and reminded them that the faculty would meet again next week. He thanked everyone for coming.