General Education Curriculum Proposal
April 2017
College of Saint Benedict/Saint John’s University

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The Common Curriculum Visioning Committee submits this report to the Joint Faculty Assembly to provide context and background information on the Curriculum Proposal found in Section 5.0 below (click to jump ahead). The Curriculum Proposal, the Learning Outcomes, and the Vision Statement were approved by the JFS on April 11, 2017 and are now presented to the JFA for a vote beginning on April 24. If approved, there will be a two year implementation phase before the new curriculum begins.

1.0 Overview

1.1 A Brief History

A few years after the JFA approved the final pieces of the Common Curriculum, an Academic Affairs Steering Committee began a program review of the Common Curriculum which included a site visit from the Wabash College Center of Inquiry for the Liberal Arts. The Wabash team found that faculty did not feel ownership of the general education curriculum and were deeply dissatisfied with the process that led to its creation. Based in part on the Wabash report, the JFS created a task force to review the Common Curriculum in 2013-2014, which recommended that the JFS seriously consider revising or remaking the general education curriculum. With this recommendation, the JFS created the Common Curriculum Visioning Committee, which began its work in Fall of 2014. CCVC spent the year reading the national literature on general education, attending conferences, and meeting with faculty and other stakeholders. In the Fall of 2015, the CCVC submitted the Making Connections report to the JFS, which outlines the findings of CCVC and proposes a process for going forward. (This document is available on the CCVC website.)

The JFS adopted the recommendations of the Making Connections report and the CCVC went forward with developing a vision statement and learning outcomes in 2015-2016. These were provisionally approved by the JFS in Spring 2016, which paved the way for the construction of model curricula based on these learning outcomes. Everyone was invited to become part of the model-building process and three teams of 4-5 faculty were created in May 2016. These teams worked diligently all summer to develop curriculum models that were presented to the faculty at the August workshop. There were several rounds of feedback and revision and a final model was chosen by the JFS in February 2017 with instructions to the CCVC for revisions. The final Vision, Learning Outcomes, and Curriculum Proposal were approved by the JFS in April. The Learning outcomes (Chapter 2) and the Curriculum proposal (Chapter 5) are now submitted to the JFA for discussion before voting. The electronic vote will begin on April 26 and conclude on May 2. If approved, we enter a two year implementation phase, which is discussed in more detail in Chapter 7 of this document. The new curriculum would be gradually phased in starting in Fall of 2019.

1.2 Design Principles

The 2015 Making Connections report proposed 8 Design Principles to guide the construction of the new general education curriculum and these were approved by the JFS. Full details of the Design Principles can be found in the original report, but here are the
titles of these principles:

1: Make High-Impact Practices Purposeful and Integrative
2: Consider Alternatives to Distribution Model
3: Follow Learning Outcomes Endorsed by the JFS Design Principle
4: Focus on “Connections.” Possible connections include:
   a) Make General Education Coherent by Scaffolding Courses
   b) Integrate General Education with the Majors
   c) Establish “Interdisciplinary Concentrations”
   d) Demonstrate Integrative Learning Through “Signature Work”
   e) Improve Connections with Activities Outside Classroom
5: Consider Equity in Curricular Design
6: Establish an Assessment Plan
7: Re-Brand General Education at CSB/SJU
8: Ensure Students Can Graduate in Four Years

CCVC has tried to deliver a curriculum proposal that is purposeful, integrative, sequential, and reflective. We have been guided by Paul Gaston’s words in the 2015 AAC&U publication *General Education Transformed: How We Can, Why We Must*: “The single most direct and effective approach to improving the educational experience for all students is the redesign of general education as a platform for integrative, digitally rich, proficiency-based, and question-centered learning grounded in the humanities, arts, sciences, and social sciences. Rather than a buffet of survey courses to be ‘gotten out of the way,’ general education must become the integrative center for the most important learning outcomes—from the first year until the degree.”

1.3 Advantages

There are numerous advantages of this new general education proposal as compared to the current curriculum. Highlighted advantages are listed below:

*Focus on Liberal Arts Inquiry*
Emphasizes inquiry and questioning
Seminars give core of common inquiry
Theology is embedded in the seminar structure and scaffolded across two courses
Inclusion of fine arts programming and cultural events into courses
Gender, race and ethnicity are central
Emphasizes and scaffolds writing
Benedictine heritage emphasized

*Scaffolded, Developmental*
Relies on developmental pedagogy
Beginner and Intermediate levels scaffolded across courses (one exception)
Embeds at least four Advanced outcomes
Outcomes spread across the four years
Early exposure to breadth
Improves first year experience and provides opportunity for improving senior year general education experience
Integrates high-impact practices (FYS, Common Intellectual Experiences, Integrative work, Diversity/Global Learning, Writing Intensive Courses)

Cohesive
Common experience with the curriculum through the seminars
Encourages collaboration for faculty teaching in clusters
Easy to explain
Integrates with majors
Integrates with study abroad
Encourages the development of introductory courses that serve non-majors
Addresses external credit problem
Coherence across parts (seminars, questions, investigations)

Feasible
Compatible with current courses
Compatible with large majors and double majors
Compatible with majors that have “block” semesters (e.g. Elem Ed, GBUS)
Size is comparable to Common Curriculum

2.0 Learning Outcomes

There are 18 learning outcomes that are scaffolded at a Beginner, Intermediate, and Advanced level. The curriculum proposed will teach to the Intermediate level for all students. Five of the Advanced outcomes are required.

The outcomes are divided into five dimensions that are meant to group and generally explain the skills: Inquiry, Expression, Problem Solving, Cultural Agility, and Catholic and Benedictine Tradition.

INQUIRY

ANALYZE: Systematically investigate issues using appropriate methods and evidence.

Beginner: Students analyze how experts pose questions or design projects, recognize that this differs according to discipline, and explain different kinds of methods and evidence that experts use to answer questions and the scope of conclusions that can be drawn from different kinds of evidence and methods.

Intermediate: Students pose questions, identify and analyze evidence to reveal important patterns and make conclusions, and evaluate different methods and types of evidence to understand the strengths and weaknesses of different approaches for a given problem.

Advanced: Students pose their own well-defined questions, select and use the most appropriate evidence and methods, perform an analysis, state conclusions and predictions that are logical extrapolations, and explain the reasons for their choices.
INFORMATION LITERACY: Identify, evaluate, and responsibly use information.

Beginner: Students access appropriate information through common search strategies, accurately cite the source, and articulate the value of accurate citation.

Intermediate: Students locate relevant information using well-designed search strategies, evaluates and uses appropriate and multiple resources, and articulates why using information has many ethical and legal implications.

Advanced: Students use well-designed search strategies to find information, evaluate and use appropriate and diverse resources, and follows the ethical and legal standards for their discipline.

READ: Elicit and construct meaning from texts.

Beginner: Students intentionally read or interpret a variety of texts for comprehension, adjusting reading strategies based on the genre, nature of the text and context of the assignment.

Intermediate: Students evaluate texts for significance, relevance to the reader’s goals, and make connections among texts and/or disciplines.

Advanced: Students read texts strategically and integrate knowledge among different texts, including independently finding supplemental texts to help understand the main texts(s).

EXPRESSION

CREATIVE KNOWLEDGE AND PRACTICE: Produce and analyze creative work.

Beginner: Students identify and articulate ideas, forms, terms, or techniques of a creative discipline; and shows an awareness of relevant historical or contemporary contexts.

Intermediate: Students produce and critique creative work in a way that demonstrates an understanding of process, the ability to use and choose forms and techniques appropriate to particular subjects, ideas, and/or media; and shows an understanding of relevant historical or contemporary contexts.

Advanced: Students produce and critically analyze fully-realized, cohesive, and self-directed work that integrates content, form, aesthetics, and techniques appropriate to students’ goals; and engages with relevant historical or contemporary contexts.

SPEAK: Construct ideas, opinions and information in appropriate oral forms.

Beginner: Students organize a presentation with a central message that is partially supported by relevant material(s). Delivery techniques make the presentation understandable, although students may appear tentative or uncomfortable.

Intermediate: Students organize a presentation with a clear central message that is consistent with relevant supporting material(s). Delivery techniques make the presentation interesting, and students appear comfortable.

Advanced: Students skillfully organize a cohesive presentation with a compelling central message, support it with relevant material(s) that establish their authority on the topic,
and use delivery techniques that make the presentation compelling. Students appear polished and confident.

**WRITE:** Construct ideas, opinions and information in appropriate written forms.

**Beginner:** Students are aware of the context, audience, and purpose of their writing and appropriately use content to explore their ideas. They organize and present the writing in ways that are appropriate to the discipline and/or genre, including using authoritative and relevant sources to support ideas. The language is clear, but may include some errors.

**Intermediate:** Students demonstrate consideration of the context, audience, and purpose of their writing and use relevant and compelling content to clearly explore their ideas within the context of the discipline. They consistently organize and present the writing in ways that are appropriate to the discipline and/or genre, including using authoritative and relevant sources to support ideas. The language is clear and straightforward, with few errors.

**Advanced:** Students demonstrate a thorough understanding of context, audience, and purpose and use relevant and compelling content to illustrate mastery of the subject. They successfully execute a wide range of conventions particular to a specific discipline and/or genre, including using high-quality, authoritative, and relevant sources to develop ideas. The language is clear, fluent and virtually error-free.

**PROBLEM SOLVING**

**ABSTRACT REASONING:** Apply forms of abstract reasoning to interpret complex problems.

**Beginner:** Students distinguish between deductive and inductive reasoning and apply deductive reasoning and formal representations to make conclusions from a set of assumptions.

**Intermediate:** Students appropriately use abstract models to explore a complex situation.

**Advanced:** Students articulate the strengths and limitations of an abstract model.

**METACOGNITION:** Optimize one’s own thinking and learning processes.

**Beginner:** Students identify their intellectual abilities and dispositions, problem solving processes, and learning strategies.

**Intermediate:** Students reflect on the weaknesses and strengths of their intellectual abilities and dispositions, effectiveness of their problem solving processes, and efficiencies of their learning strategies.

**Advanced:** Students apply their metacognitive knowledge to improve their problem solving processes, and to strengthen learning strategies.

**QUANTIFY:** Analyze the quantitative dimensions of situations to understand them better.

**Beginner:** Students draw conclusions from and describe quantitative arguments, recognizing that assumptions, errors, and fallacies may affect the argument’s validity.
Intermediate: Students can construct an appropriate representation of data and perform calculations to interpret a situation.

Advanced: Student apply appropriate numerical techniques to construct their own quantitative arguments.

THINK SCIENTIFICALLY: Evaluate truthfulness of claims about the observable world using scientific methods.

Beginner: Students articulate how science is a way of knowing that is characterized by empirical criteria, logical argument, and skeptical review. They explain the way science is used, its limitations, and how it impacts and contributes to today’s culture and society.

Intermediate: Students apply scientific results to describe, explain, or predict observable phenomena. Students recognize obvious flaws in poorly designed scientific experiments.

Advanced: Students design and conduct scientific work to confirm or refute scientific claims.

WORLD SYSTEMS: Analyze global institutions and systems and their effects on the human and/or natural world.

Beginner: Students explain the historic and contemporary roles of global institutions or systems in the social and/or natural world.

Intermediate: Students analyze the effects of global institutions and systems on the social and/or natural world. Students demonstrate how factors such as migration, natural resources, economic systems, politics, geography, or conflict affect local and global communities.

Advanced: Students apply their knowledge of global institutions and systems to evaluate proposed solutions to complex global problems.

CULTURAL AGILITY

COMMON GOOD: Develop a conception of a moral life that incorporates concern for the common good.

Beginner: Students explain the moral dimensions of situations, perspectives, and actions in daily, political, and social life and recognize that there are competing, yet legitimate, conceptions of what defines the common good.

Intermediate: Students evaluate different situations, perspectives, or actions, giving reasons why some are better than others. Their analyses demonstrate their understanding of the complexities of character and moral responsibilities on an individual and civic level.

Advanced: Students demonstrate how their involvement in a campus or community project connects to the common good and reflects their deepened understanding of how complex values are embedded in daily life and institutions.

GENDER: Examine the social construction of gender and related individual and
systemic inequities.

**Beginner:** Students identify a diversity of gender identities. Students identify the social and cultural factors that shape their own gender identities and how these factors influence their self-conception and worldview.

**Intermediate:** Students analyze historical and contemporary constructions of gender. Students analyze how factors such as race, ethnicity, age, class, sexuality, disability, religion, or nationality intersect with gender.

**Advanced:** Students analyze structural and systemic differences based on gender and articulate ways to address inequities.

**RACE AND ETHNICITY:** Examine the social construction of race and ethnicity and resulting inequities.

**Beginner:** Students articulate that they have racial and ethnic identities. Students identify the factors that shape racial and ethnic identities and how these factors influence their self-conception and relationships to their communities.

**Intermediate:** Students demonstrate how historical and contemporary constructions of race and ethnicity shape cultural rules and biases. Students analyze how factors such as gender, age, class, sexuality, disability, religion, or nationality intersect with race and ethnicity.

**Advanced:** Students critically analyze structural and systemic differences based on race and ethnicity and articulate ways to address inequities.

**TEAMWORK:** Interact effectively in a group while incorporating diverse perspectives.

**Beginner:** Students clarify that team members have different roles, engage team members by acknowledging their contributions, articulates the importance of multiple and diverse perspectives in a group, and complete all individual tasks on time.

**Intermediate:** Students use team roles effectively, builds constructively on the work of others, incorporates multiple perspectives into the work of the team, and produces independent work that advances the project.

**Advanced:** Students perform different roles appropriate to the context, are self-reflective about their own roles and contributions, build constructively on the work of other and encourages advanced participation by all team members, leverages diverse perspectives of group members.

**CATHOLIC AND BENEDICTINE TRADITION**

**BENEDICTINE HALLMARKS:** Apply aspects of the Benedictine heritage, including texts, arts, practices, and values to their lives.
**Beginner:** Students identify hallmarks of the Benedictine tradition and their grounding in local Benedictine communities.

**Intermediate:** Students apply Benedictine Hallmarks to questions in individual or social life.

**Advanced:** Students demonstrate how their academic research, involvement in a campus or community project, or anticipated future role in society integrates Benedictine hallmarks.

**RELIGIOUS ENGAGEMENT:** Analyze religious engagement with society.

**Beginner:** Students identify and explain one or more forms of religious engagement with the world.

**Intermediate:** Students analyze forms of religious engagement by drawing on multiple sources that may come from a range of academic disciplines.

**Advanced:** Students evaluate forms of religious engagement in conversation with their primary academic disciplines or with their involvement in a campus, community, or professional project.

**THEOLOGICAL REASONING:** Think critically about sources, doctrines, and themes of the Christian tradition.

**Beginner:** Students identify elements of Christian theological sources, which may include scripture, practices, texts, or art forms. They describe a theological method and explain a theological teaching, doctrine, or theme.

**Intermediate:** Students interpret theological sources and their contexts. They analyze applications of a theological method, and compare multiple perspectives on a teaching, theme, or doctrine.

**Advanced:** Students demonstrate creative theological reasoning in evaluating contemporary social issues, conducting interdisciplinary research, or constructing their own theological argument.

### 3.0 Comparison of our Collected Data and the Current Curriculum Proposal

The figure below on page 10 compares a summary of many CSB/SJU faculty and staff discussions and their desires for CSB/SJU students upon graduation and beyond with the basic structure and learning outcomes in the new general education curriculum proposal. Most of the expressed desires for our students can be met within the new curriculum.
### Traits faculty desire for our students:

**General Themes Emerging from the 2014 Faculty Workshop and Conversations: What do we want CSB/SJU graduates to be like 5, 10, 20 years after they graduate?**

**Learning Traits**
- Flexible, adaptable, innovative, creative
- Lifelong learning, curiosity, life of the mind
- Openness to new ideas
- Connecting the interdisciplinary dots

**Skills to Success**
- Critical thinking
- Communication skills
- Team and Leadership skills

**Individuality and Community**
- Awareness, Tolerance, and Engagement with varied Groups (Global, Gender, Diversity)

**Community Citizens**
- Autonomy, independence, and self-awareness

**Values**
- Happiness, personal fulfillment, meaning
- Moral, Ethical, and Benedictine values

### Where do the traits desired by faculty for our students fit in the new curriculum?

Most of the are embedded in the learning outcomes (color coded to match the traits faculty desire):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Learning Outcomes</th>
<th>Inquiry</th>
<th>Information Literacy</th>
<th>Analyze</th>
<th>Read</th>
<th>Expression</th>
<th>Write</th>
<th>Speak</th>
<th>Creative Knowledge and Practice</th>
<th>Problem Solving</th>
<th>Abstract Reasoning</th>
<th>Think Scientifically</th>
<th>Quantify</th>
<th>Metacognition</th>
<th>World Systems</th>
<th>Cultural Agility</th>
<th>Race and Ethnicity</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Common Good</th>
<th>Teamwork</th>
<th>Catholic Benedictine Tradition</th>
<th>Benedictine Hallmarks</th>
<th>Theological Reasoning</th>
<th>Religious Engagement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

We expect meeting the learning outcomes will enable many of the Learning Traits (the Red box) desirable by faculty for our students. In addition, the Learning Traits and Values are incorporated into the curricular structure:

**Seminar Courses:**
- Role of a liberal arts education is discussed in all four seminars
- Students explore questions like: Who am I? What is my place in the world? How can I use my particular skills to contribute to the common good?
- Seminar 400 is designed to integrate their learning from the thematic clusters and disciplinary coursework

**Question Courses:**
- Students learn how different disciplines ask questions and approach a problem (a step important for lifelong learning)
- Students are exposed to the kind of big, enduring questions that define a liberal arts education

**Investigation Courses:**
- Students explore the same theme from multiple perspectives
- Students develop a broader knowledge of a topic/theme than can be achieved by a single disciplinary perspective
4.0 Visual Representation of the Proposal

The visual on page 12 shows that the new curriculum is divided into Seminar, Questions, and Investigations courses. A Seminar is taken each of the four years. These courses provide students the opportunity to explore their place in the world. The Questions courses initiate a student’s development as a lifelong learner. In the Investigation courses students enhance their research skills and investigate a theme from multiple disciplines.

Also within the new curriculum is a language proficiency requirement that is identical to our current language requirement.

The 18 learning outcomes are housed within 11 courses that make up the new curriculum. The second image on page 13 highlights the learning outcomes embedded in each course.
Seminars:
- Seminar 100: Self and Culture
- Seminar 200: Community and Religion
- Seminar 300: World and Culture
- Seminar 400: Connections

Investigations:
How do different disciplines investigate and explore a question?

Questions:
How do different disciplines approach and ask a question?

Language proficiency

Theology
Science and Society
Creative Practice
Writing and Analysis
Think Globally
Formal Reasoning
Making Meaning
Seminar 100:
Self and Culture:
• Write (B)
• Information Literacy (B)
• Race and Ethnicity (B)
• Gender (B)
• Metacognition (B)
• Common Good (B)

Seminar 200:
Community and Religion:
• Teamwork (B)
• Theological Reasoning (B)
• Religious Engagement (B)
• Benedictine Hallmarks (B)

Seminar 300:
World and Culture:
• Metacognition (I)
• World Systems (I)
• Gender (I)
• Race and Ethnicity (I)

Seminar 400:
Connections:
• Common Good (I)
• Metacognition (A)
• Benedictine Hallmarks (I)
• Analyze (A)

Making Meaning:
• Read (B)
• Analyze (B)
• Creative Knowledge (B)

Science and Society
• Think Scientifically (I)
• Quantify (I)
• Teamwork (I)

Creative Practice
• Speak (I)
• Creative Knowledge (I)

Think Globally:
• Think Scientifically (B)
• Quantify (B)
• World Systems (B)

Writing and Analysis:
• Information Literacy (I)
• Analyze (I)
• Write (I)

Additional Requirements
• Distribution (TBD)
• Language proficiency
5.0 General Education Curriculum Proposal: The Connections Curriculum

5.1 Vision

Grounded in the liberal arts and the Catholic and Benedictine traditions, the Connections Curriculum reflects our commitment to prepare our graduates to thrive in a complex and dynamic world. We challenge students to make connections across their studies, their lives, and their communities and to reimagine themselves in new contexts. Our graduates understand and integrate multiple perspectives and methods as they persevere in working toward the common good.

5.2 General Requirements and Overview

**Learning outcomes:** The Connections Curriculum is built with the 18 learning outcomes approved on April 11, 2017 by the JFS. All students will get through the Intermediate level for all 18 learning outcomes and the Advanced level for at least 5. Only one of the courses (Formal Reasoning) includes both Beginning and Intermediate levels in the same course. All other learning outcomes are scaffolded across two courses. While the language requirement for the new curriculum does not carry these 18 learning outcomes, it maintains the linguistic and cultural requirements as in the current curriculum and supports some of the above outcomes.

**Integration with Majors:** Each major must complete the Advanced level of at least three learning outcomes: the Write learning outcome and two other general education outcomes of the major’s choosing. There is no limit on how many general education courses can also be counted as courses for the major.

**Size:** 11 courses; 4 Seminars, 3 100-level “Questions” courses; 4 200-300 level themed “Investigations” courses; everything but the Seminar courses may also count for the major. In addition, there is a language proficiency requirement with expectations similar to the linguistic level and cultural exploration as in the current curriculum and though not integrated into the model (since some students will have achieved the level prior to arriving on campus) language courses support other learning goals, such as “Expression” and “Cultural Agility.”

**Prerequisites:** The four Seminars must be taken sequentially, with the exception of second year students who study abroad. The Investigation courses (the 200-300 level themed courses) will have the following pre or co-requisites (all are 100 level Questions courses):

- Writing and Analysis has a prerequisite of Making Meaning
- Creative Practice has a prerequisite of Making Meaning
- Science and Society has a prerequisite of Thinking Globally
- Theology has a prerequisite of Seminar 200
**Distribution:** This model includes a divisional distribution requirement as a graduation requirement, separate from the general education curriculum. That is, divisional courses would not have general education learning outcomes. Students can complete distribution requirements as part of their major, as part of the general education program, or through additional courses they have taken externally, while abroad, or while on campus.

There are four reasons for this type of divisional distribution requirement:

- External credits can count for the appropriate distributional graduation requirement even if they don’t meet general education learning outcomes.
- Introductory courses would count toward the divisional distribution requirements even if they did not also count toward the general education requirement. (This helps undeclared students or students who change majors.)
- Faculty could continue to teach some of the introductory courses they currently teach as well as develop new courses that meet the general education learning outcomes. Keeping the distribution requirement separate allows us to change the distribution requirement independently of changing the general education curriculum – it gives us more flexibility in responding to problems.

We expect that we will have a distributional requirement similar to what we currently have: 1 NS, 1 SS, 1 FA, 2 HM, and a specific language proficiency. However, the particulars of a distribution requirement will be determined during the implementation phase. Concerns have been raised about how interdisciplinary programs and majors can count their courses in the distribution requirements. This will be part of the discussion of the details of the distribution requirement during implementation.

**Why this model?** CCVC has prepared numerous models for discussion. This final model takes into account many of the preferences that faculty expressed for enhancing the learning experience for CSB/SJU students. First, the learning outcomes are embedded in coursework through the Intermediate level. Second, the curriculum is a size that many agree is manageable. Third, the model adopts the Seminar approach which was a favorite feature of one of the original models presented to the JFA. The Seminars provide a common experience throughout a student’s four years. And these courses help a student explore their place in the world at a personal, community, and global level. Fourth, students explore coursework from many different disciplines. Students will take “Questions” and “Investigation” courses. These courses not only help students develop key skills embedded in the learning outcomes but let students explore and learn from many different disciplines and in an integrated way. For example, the Questions courses give students a chance to understand how different disciplines ask and answer questions. Students are able to expand on this ability in the Investigation courses where they begin to investigate a question from multiple disciplines through thematic clusters. Finally, the skills gained, the multidisciplinarity that a liberal arts education provides, and the sense of place are all integrated in the final seminar.

**5.3 Curriculum and Course Descriptions (aligned with Learning Outcomes)**

**Seminar Courses**

The Seminars are designed to give students common experiences throughout their
four years. Each Seminar requires students to attend academic, cultural or fine arts events outside the classroom; Seminars 100, 200 and 400 will have at least two common readings a piece. These readings will be chosen by faculty teaching the respective Seminar. Outside of the common readings, faculty can design their own syllabus as long as it includes all the learning outcomes for that particular Seminar.

Students must take one Seminar per year. In all of the Liberal Arts Seminars, students are encouraged to reflect on what constitutes a liberal arts education and articulate what makes such an education valuable.

**Seminar 100: Self and Society**
This Seminar must be taken in the fall semester by all entering first year students, introducing students to academic life on campus. In this course students begin to explore the moral dimensions of self and society, with particular attention to learning about social dynamics of race, ethnicity, and gender. Student writing skills are foregrounded.

- Write (Beginner)
- Information literacy (Beginner)
- Common Good (Beginner)
- Race and Ethnicity (Beginner)
- Gender (Beginner)
- Metacognition (Beginner)

**Seminar 200: Community and Religion**
This seminar engages the theme of community, especially as it emerges in Christian theology and Benedictine tradition. It explores ways in which religious communities engage in wider society. Students also practice community through skills in teamwork.

- Teamwork (Beginner)
- Theological Reasoning (Beginner)
- Religious Engagement (Beginner)
- Benedictine Hallmarks (Beginner)

**Seminar 300: World and Culture**
As depicted in the learning outcomes, this Seminar provides an opportunity for students to think about their place in the world. This course can be completed on faculty-led Study Abroad programs; those who do not study abroad for a semester will take it on campus.

- Metacognition (Intermediate)
- World Systems (Intermediate)
Seminar 400: Connections
This is the culminating liberal arts experience for the students. It should be designed to integrate their learning from the past four years, particularly within their general education coursework. Discussions could include the role of big questions and investigative work as they move on from their undergraduate careers. Written work must include a student reflection on their chosen thematic cluster.

- Gender (Intermediate)
- Race and Ethnicity (Intermediate)
- Common Good (Intermediate)
- Metacognition (Advanced)
- Benedictine Hallmarks (Intermediate)
- Analyze (Advanced)

Questions Courses
Students must take all 3 Questions courses: Making Meaning, Think Globally, and Formal Reasoning. Making Meaning must be completed in the first year. It is recommend that at least one other Questions course is completed in the first year; upper division status is dependent upon completing all three Questions courses. These courses will range across disciplines and topics and there is no limit on how many can count for majors and minors. Departments can design Questions courses on any topic as long as they meet the following criteria and learning outcomes. It is expected that current introductory courses could be modified to meet and qualify as a Questions course.

All Questions courses will:

- Investigate a significant issue in depth. These courses are not designed to be surveys of disciplinary information, but designed around big questions of historical or contemporary significance.
- Examine and demonstrate how particular discipline(s) and fields of study address that question.
- Discuss the foundational role that big questions of historical or contemporary significance play in the study of the liberal arts.

Making Meaning (100): A course that is designated as Making Meaning can be taught in different disciplines under many different names. As the learning outcomes indicate, all Making Meaning courses will focus on the development of posing questions, interpreting texts, providing evidence, and understanding methods for answering questions. This will include an understanding of some of the basic concepts and techniques that underlie a creative work or discipline. As the Questions course criteria make clear, this course will also investigate a significant question, of the professor’s choosing, in depth. Professors will include how their discipline approaches significant questions and may include other
learning objectives that are appropriate to the specific course, as devised by the department.

- Read (Beginner)
- Analyze (Beginner)
- Creative Knowledge (Beginner)
- Attendance at two or more fine arts events will be built into the course content

**Formal Reasoning (100):** A course that is designated as Formal Reasoning could be taught in different disciplines under many different names. As the learning goals indicate, all Formal Reasoning courses will focus on the development and understanding of deductive and inductive reasoning as well as using abstract models as a way of simplifying complex situations. As a Questions course, this course will also investigate a significant question, of the professor’s choosing, in depth. Professors will include in the course their discipline’s approach to the significant question using deductive and inductive reasoning as well as abstract models. Professors may include other learning objectives that are appropriate to the specific course, as devised by the department.

- Abstract Reasoning (Beginner and Intermediate)
- Speak (Beginner)

**Think Globally (100):** A course that is designated as Think Globally can be taught in different disciplines under many different names. While a course that is designated as Think Globally can be taught by different departments and programs, due to the learning goals assigned to this course, it is likely to be taught within a social science, natural science, or interdisciplinary course. As the learning outcomes indicate, all Think Globally courses will focus on developing students’ understanding of science as a way of knowing, using and working with quantitative information, and identifying and explaining the role of a world system on a natural or social setting. As a Questions course, students will study a significant question in depth. Professors may include other learning objectives that are appropriate to the specific course, as devised by the department.

- Think Scientifically (Beginner)
- Quantify (Beginner)
- World Systems (Beginner)

**Investigation Courses**

Students must take all four Investigations courses. Three of these four must be on the same theme and compose what is called a thematic cluster. Thematic clusters provide opportunities for students to explore a theme from a variety of perspectives. Thematic clusters are designed to give students a way to integrate their learning. Students should be able to develop broader and more comprehensive knowledge of a topic than can be achieved by a single disciplinary perspective. Upon completing
their thematic cluster, students will also have a deeper understanding and appreciation for a liberal arts education.

Departments can design Investigations courses on any topic as long as they can demonstrate that they fit the requirements for a thematic cluster described above and meet the learning outcomes for the course; thus, departments can design a variety of Investigations courses by adapting existing courses and creating new ones. These courses will range across disciplines and topics and there is no limit on how many can count for majors and minors.

**Writing and Analysis (200-300):** A course that is designated as Writing and Analysis can be taught by many different departments and programs. As the learning objectives specify, all courses designated as Writing and Analysis will focus on developing students’ analysis, information literacy, and writing skills. Professors may include other learning objectives that are appropriate to the specific course, as determined by the professor or department. As an Investigations course, most courses designated as Writing and Analysis will be themed.

- Information Literacy (Intermediate)
- Analyze (Intermediate)
- Write (Intermediate)

**Creative Practice (200-300):** While a course that is designated as Creative Practice could be taught by different departments and programs, due to the learning outcomes assigned to this course, it is likely to be taught within a fine arts, humanities, or interdisciplinary course. As the learning objectives indicate, all courses designated as Creative Practice will focus on developing students’ understanding of creative works and speaking skills. Professors may include other learning objectives that are appropriate to the specific course, as determined by the professor or department. As an Investigations course, most courses designated as Creative Practice will be themed.

- Speak (Intermediate)
- Creative Knowledge (Intermediate)

**Science and Society (200-300):** While a course that is designated as Science and Society could be taught by different departments and programs, due to the learning outcomes assigned to this course, it is likely to be taught within a social science, natural science, or interdisciplinary course. As the learning objectives indicate, all courses designated as Science and Society will focus on developing students’ understanding of science as a way of knowing, using and working with quantitative information, and working in teams. Professors may include other learning objectives that are appropriate to the specific course, as determined by the professor or department. As an Investigations course, most courses designated as Science and Society will be themed.

- Think Scientifically (Intermediate)
Quantify (Intermediate)
Teamwork (Intermediate)

**Theology (200-300):** While a course with this designation can be taught by colleagues from multiple disciplines, due to the learning goals assigned to this course, it is likely that many of these courses will be offered through the Theology department. As the learning objectives indicate, all of these courses will focus on developing students’ understanding of theological reasoning and religious engagement with society, along with students’ critical reading skills. Professors may include other learning objectives that are appropriate to the specific course, as devised by the professor or department. As an Investigations course, most of these courses will be themed.

- Read (Intermediate)
- Theological Reasoning (Intermediate)
- Religious Engagement (Intermediate)

**Thematic Clusters:**

Thematic clusters provide opportunities for students to explore a theme from a variety of perspectives and to integrate their learning across courses. Through the cluster, students should be able to develop broader and more comprehensive knowledge of a topic than can be achieved by a single disciplinary perspective. Upon completing their thematic cluster, students will have a deeper understanding and appreciation for a liberal arts education. Seminar 400 will provide an opportunity to discuss this understanding.

Thematic clusters will contain a broad theme that can span many different disciplines. The theme does not need to span the entire semester of a course but can be embedded into a unit, a case study, or an enduring thread of discussion. While a deliberate component of the course, the theme does not need to envelop every aspect of the course.

To choose these themes, an ad hoc committee of faculty from multiple disciplines and divisions will present up to six options to the JFA. Each theme will include criteria that must be met in order for a course to count as being included in that theme. At that point, the JFA will vote by electronic ballot for three themes. These might be adjusted every five years or so if desired by the faculty.

The Director of the Curriculum, the Academic Dean, and the Registrar’s office would work together to make sure that there were sufficient offerings of all the Investigations courses in each of the clusters. Courses would be designated as falling under the particular clusters by the CCC.

Faculty teaching Investigations courses would be expected to meet once a semester with their colleagues teaching in the same cluster. This would create opportunities for collaboration among faculty and better advising for students.
Four Year Plans

A pdf document of 4 year plans CCVC has developed in consultation with faculty can be downloaded by clicking the link below. This document can also be found on the CCVC website. Click to download:

http://www.users.csbsju.edu/~bbenesh/docs/4YearPlans20170418.pdf
5.4 Advising Sheet

Connections Curriculum Requirements

Required as part of the graduation requirements:
We are proposing a distribution requirement that is separate from the Connections Curriculum, which is designed to ensure that students are exposed to several disciplinary perspectives as part of a comprehensive liberal arts education. Distributional requirements can come from majors, minors, and/or the general education curriculum. External credits may also count as part of the distribution.

Required as part of the Connections Curriculum:
Students are required to reach proficiency in a language other than English. If a student is starting a new language they will take three semesters; students continuing in a language will be placed depending on their language skills)

Language 111
Language 211
Language 212

Connections Curriculum Coursework: There are no distributional requirements within the Connections coursework. The Connections Curriculum has three kinds of coursework: Seminars, Questions, and Investigations. Seminar courses cannot count toward the major or minor, but Questions and Investigations coursework can. There is no limit on how many Connections Curriculum courses can count toward the major.

Seminars: These courses give students a chance to explore their place in the world. They are all four credits.

Seminars: Seminar 100: Self and Culture (taken during the first year)
Seminars: Seminar 200: Community and Religion (taken during the second year)
Seminars: Seminar 300: World and Culture (taken during the third year)
Seminars: Seminar 400: Connections (taken during the final year)

Questions: These courses help students understand how different disciplines ask questions as a foundation for lifelong learning. They are designed around a central question of historical or contemporary significance. These are 100 level courses and four credits. These courses can count towards the major or minor and come from many different departments and programs.

Questions: Making Meaning: (taken during the second semester of the first year)
Questions: Think Globally: (taken during the first two years)
Questions: Formal Reasoning: (taken during the first two years)

Investigations: These courses help students explore and further investigate questions from multiple perspectives. Students must choose from three or four themes that will be determined by faculty. Three of the courses must come from this theme. These are 200 or 300 level courses. These courses can count towards the major or minor and come from many different departments and programs.

Investigations: Common Theme: __________________________________________

Investigations: Science and Society (Think Globally is a pre-requisite for this course)
    Theme: ________
Investigations: Creative Practice
    Theme: ________
Investigations: Writing and Analysis (Making Meaning is a pre-requisite for this course)
    Theme: ________
Investigations: Theology (Seminar 200 is a pre-requisite for this course)
    Theme: ________
6.0 Frequently Asked Questions

What happens to the Common Curriculum requirements?

If adopted, the Connections Curriculum replaces the Common Curriculum. Students will no longer be required to take FYS, Ethics, Theo 111, or other courses in the Common Curriculum. Additionally, we will no longer need to assess the 70 learning outcomes of the Common Curriculum.

How will this affect staffing?

CCVC designed the new curriculum under the assumption that it would be taught with the current faculty, including many of the current FYS faculty. One way we have thought about this is as follows: there are currently three semesters of general education specific courses (FYS and ECS) and two semesters of Theology. In the new curriculum there are four general education specific courses (the Seminars) and one of these Seminars includes theological learning outcomes and will mostly be taught by our current theology faculty. Of course, there will be changes in what departments teach in the new curriculum.

How might a course I currently teach fit into the new curriculum?

We have not included class caps in the current proposal in order to give us some room to handle staffing issues that might arise. While we have looked at various ways the staffing might be configured, and are confident that we have the staff to teach this curriculum, staffing details is an issue that will be determined during the implementation phase.

Many of the classes we teach now can transition into the new curriculum with modification. In particular, we expect that many of Questions and Investigations designated courses can be designed from our currently offered courses with some revision. The Seminars will likely require new course design work, yet for some of us one of the seminars may look similar to something we are currently teaching. To determine if a class you teach now will fit into the new curriculum, look at the learning outcomes housed within the courses. Envision ways in which you already teach outcomes like these, or ways you could tweak your current courses to meet these outcomes. Of course, you are also welcome to design new courses.

What happens if the Connections Curriculum does not pass the JFA vote?

If the JFA does not vote to approve the new curriculum, then the Common Curriculum remains in place and will need immediate work. Revision will start on the Common Curriculum, and this process starts anew. As a start, the learning outcomes will need to be rewritten in a way that improves student learning and makes them more assessable. These changes will likely will result in course modifications and in some cases, restructuring of the curriculum.
Tell me again: why are considering a new curriculum?

In 2011 an external evaluator, the Wabash College Center of Inquiry for the Liberal Arts, conducted a site visit and found that the Common Curriculum lacked ownership by the faculty and failed to offer the students a common liberal arts experience. Next, review of the Common Curriculum by an ad hoc task force in 2013, at the instruction of the JFS, found that faculty were dissatisfied with the current curriculum. Additionally, HLC has expressed concern over the Common Curriculum’s learning outcomes and assessment. In summary, the current Common Curriculum is not meeting students’ needs.

There are many features that the faculty wanted to see in a general education curriculum that are lacking in the Common Curriculum. These include: a common experience for the students, cohesiveness among the parts, points of integration, space for reflection on the meaning and value of the liberal arts, a more prominent emphasis on the Catholic Benedictine tradition, and opportunities for faculty to collaborate outside of their departments. For a full explanation of why CCVC was tasked with developing a new curriculum, please see the 2015 Making Connections report, which is available on the CCVC website.

How does this fit with Study Abroad?

We expect that the faculty advisor leading a semester long study abroad program will teach Seminar 300: World and Culture. We believe the learning outcomes for Seminar 300 will enrich the students’ study abroad experience. While for most students this will be in their junior year, students going abroad in their sophomore year will take Seminar 300 early and those taking it in their senior year will take it late. We plan to have regularly scheduled faculty development workshops to help them design courses that would meet SEM 300 learning outcomes. It is also likely that some of the Study Abroad offerings from host institutions will fulfill Investigations courses.

Can I have a short and sweet overview of the curriculum?

The new curriculum consists of 11 courses: 4 Seminars (one each year; cannot count toward majors or minors); 3 Questions courses (100 level; can count toward majors and minors) and Investigations courses (200-300 level; can count towards majors or minors). In theory, any department could teach any of these courses; in practice, the learning outcomes housed in each course are likely to constrain which departments teach which courses.

There is a language proficiency requirement that is the same as the one in the Common Curriculum. There is a separate distribution requirement. The details of this distribution requirement will be worked out next year during the implementation phase; it is likely to be similar to the Common Curriculum divisional distribution requirement.
How does advising fit into the new curriculum?

We are still working on how to best fit advising into the new curriculum. The FYX task force has some advising recommendations coming out in their May report. We will be working with Academic Advising and the FYX group during the implementation phase to design the advising structure. Faculty will continue to be the primary academic advisors for students.

Why is the same learning outcome listed in multiple courses?

One of the ways this curriculum differs from the Common Curriculum is that the learning outcomes are scaffolded developmentally. Each learning outcome is designed in three tiers: Beginning, Intermediate, and Advanced. All students will get through Intermediate for all the learning outcomes and some of the Advanced (which Advanced outcomes will depend on the major). The 100 level courses tend to have only Beginner level outcomes and the 200-300 level courses tend to only have Intermediate learning outcomes. Learning outcomes show up in multiple courses because every student must get through both the Beginning and Intermediate levels. Take, for example, the Write learning outcome. Students will take the Beginner tier in Seminar 100, the Intermediate tier in the Investigations course, Writing and Analysis, and the Advanced tier in their major.

Note that students and faculty do not need to keep track of learning outcomes during advising sessions---the course requirements automatically ensure that students will meet all of the Beginner and Intermediate learning outcomes by taking the required courses.

Can a student graduate in four years?

Yes. For example, a student with a 40 credit major and 20 credit minor, who takes all three language classes, who uses the light estimate of only two Connections Curriculum classes to double count in the major/minor, and who studies abroad with the light estimate of only one course abroad applying to the major, minor or Connections Curriculum, will still have five course spaces available for other interests, for undecided explorations, or for any leftover needs through the disciplinary requirement. As now, unusually large majors will have four year plans with less wiggle room. For a link to four year plans, click here.

Who will decide if a current or newly designed class counts?

The (renamed) Common Curriculum Committee will continue to do the work of approving general education courses. It is likely that the CCC will grow in size for a couple of years as a large number of courses are submitted for approval, but then after that it will be business as usual.

How does my department fit in the new curriculum?

The courses in Connections do not belong to any particular departments, so you can build your program by incorporating Connections classes in your program. You can decide which of your courses to affiliate with Connections. To determine how your department can figure into the new curriculum, ask: Which of your department’s classes would you like to offer as part of the new curriculum? Look at the learning outcomes housed in each of the 11 courses in Connections. Envision how your department’s courses be revised to be designated as Connections Curriculum courses.
Additionally, remember the possibility of innovation. Speculate about whether a new course your department has been dreaming about could now come to birth in the new curriculum.

Finally, your department can decide how many Questions and Investigations courses you would like to count for your major and minor. There is no limit.

What is a thematic cluster?

A thematic cluster is three courses from different disciplines taught on the same theme. Thematic clusters are designed to help students make connections among their coursework and to see the value in how different disciplines approach similar questions, which is central to a liberal arts education. In the proposed curriculum the thematic clusters are found in the Investigations courses (200-300 level). For example, a student might choose the theme of Sustainability and then take Science and Society, Theology, and Creative Practice coursework from classes that teach within the Sustainability theme.

There will be three to four themes chosen by a group of faculty early in the implementation phase. Faculty will apply to the CCC to have their courses approved on a theme. We expect that the themes will be reviewed every four or five years and changes to the themes can be made at this time. Examples of the kind of themes which will form the clusters include: Sustainability, Civic Engagement, Justice. The themes must be broad enough that a wide range of departments can teach on the theme. The entire class does not need to be devoted to the theme; the general education theme can be one theme among several taught in the class.

7.0 Implementation

There will be an Implementation Committee that will guide the implementation of the new curriculum. We will need representatives from all of the divisions and many departments to serve on this committee. If you are interested, please contact Emily Esch or Barb May.

7.1 Assessment Plan

Assessment Plan for the Connections Curriculum:

Who oversees assessment of the Connections Curriculum?

Faculty are responsible and need to take ownership for the assessment of the General Education Program. Here are assignments for facilitating the process with the help and support of faculty:

Oversight of the assessment plan and timeline: General Education Director, Office of Academic Assessment and Effectiveness (AAE), and the Academic Dean

Assessment collection: General Education Director, AAE

Assessment workshops: General Education Director and Assessment team, AAE, Academic Dean

Yearly report: General Education Director with support from Assessment team, Academic Dean and AAE

Financial and faculty development support: Academic Dean, AAE, Dean of the Faculty with guidance from General Education Director

Oversight of data collection: AAE and Academic Dean

Oversight of faculty compliance and support: Academic Dean and Dean of the Faculty
**How will learning outcomes be assessed?**

We have 18 learning outcomes, and 4-5 outcomes will be assessed each year. Artifacts from each course that teach towards this outcome will be collected during the academic year. The artifacts will undergo assessment (led by AAE and the General Education Director) and the assessment reports made available early the following year. Workshops will be held to address needs as shown by the data. A mid-year assessment report will collate the reports for the previous academic year as well as set of next step action items as a result of discussions held during the fall (available online). Faculty development and other support will be provided in the spring. The general education curriculum will undergo complete program review every ten years. All outcomes will be be assessed in a four year cycle. This means that at least two rounds of assessment of all learning goals will be completed within the timeline for program review. The curriculum is evaluated as a whole and discussed with the community. Thus, the curriculum will have been assessed at least once in its entirety for program review.

**Who will conduct assessment?**

Assessment will be completed in May. A group of approximately 6-7 appointed faculty will support the General Education Director as part of an Assessment Team (with representation from the divisions). The team will help to recruit and facilitate May assessment workshops. Approximately 5-10 faculty will be recruited, along with the team leader, to conduct assessment for each goal. It is expected that those who participate in teaching courses with these learning outcomes will periodically participate in this process. Normalization of rubrics will be supported by AAE and stipends will be provided to those who participate. The team leader will receive a larger stipend to collect and report the data to the General Education Director who will collate the data into a final report. The report will be published online and briefly presented at the August workshop for the outcomes assessed the previous year. Discussions on the results will occur during the fall semester (led by the General Education Director) to create a set of next step action items. APSAC will review the assessment reports when submitted in November (including the next step action items). Faculty development, with the support of the Academic Dean, Dean of the Faculty, and AAE will begin in the spring.

**7.2 Choosing a distribution requirement**

There was interest by faculty and staff to support students completing coursework from multiple disciplines and divisions. This encourages exposure to many ways of thinking and a breadth of concepts and content. Instead of embedding these requirements within the general education curriculum, we recommend in this proposal that a distribution requirement is part of the graduation requirement. The type of distribution requirement will be decided upon during implementation and will need to be approved by the JFS and the Board of Trustees (which must approve changes to graduation requirements), but we expect it will look similar to the divisional distribution requirement in the Common Curriculum. During implementation, there will be an opportunity to discuss the role of the division and a distributional requirement. Concerns have been raised about how interdisciplinary programs and majors can count their courses in the distribution requirements. This will be part of the discussion of the details of the distribution requirement during implementation.
7.3 Professional Development

There will be three years of workshops and other opportunities to work on revising old courses and developing new courses for the new curriculum. SD 2020 has provided a budget of $100,000 per year for those three years. This might start as early as this summer. In addition, SD 2020 has given funds to the Catholic Benedictine Academic Integration Committee and FYX, which will include faculty development on the Catholic Benedictine learning outcomes.

Funds may be used for summer stipends, attendance at workshops and conferences, and working groups during the academic year. We know that we will be organizing opportunities for faculty around the following topics: advising, course design, assessment, value of the liberal arts, race and ethnicity, gender, inclusivity, metacognition, Catholic Benedictine tradition, and active pedagogy. We also will form working groups around the thematic clusters and common readings.
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