PROPOSAL TO MODIFY STUDENT-FACING ASPECTS OF THE CORE CURRICULUM, INCLUDING ADDITION OF A DIVERSITIES AND SOCIAL INEQUALITIES REQUIREMENT

April 3, 2018

In its review of the Core Curriculum, the Core Evaluation Committee (CEC) recognized the value of the Core in serving the educational interests of our students, but recommended a number of revisions. As originally implemented, the Core Curriculum consisted of twenty seven learning goals distributed in seven categories. One subset of the CEC recommendations, those that would simplify goals and streamline the faculty facing aspects of the core, has previously been reviewed by the Core Requirements Committee (CRC), which proposed a series of simplifications. These were enacted by the SAS faculty in spring 2017.

A second set of CEC recommendations would directly impact students either by changing the student facing categories (please see Table 1 for the current version, proposed version is given in Appendix A) which guide students in meeting the Core requirements or by changing elements of the administration of the Core. These recommendations include the addition of a diversity requirement, reconsideration of the Information Technology and Research (ITR) category and its goals, limiting the goals a course is certified for to those satisfying no more than two categories, and requiring Core courses to be offered on a predictable basis.

> **Table 1: Student Facing Categories in the Current Version of the Core Curriculum**
>
> Contemporary Challenges (2 courses)
> Areas of Inquiry
>   Natural Sciences (2 courses)
>   Social and Historical Analysis (2 courses, 1 in each area)
>   Arts and Humanities (2 courses)
> Cognitive Processes
>   Writing and Communication (3 courses)
>   Quantitative and Formal Reasoning (2 courses)
>   Information Technology and Research (1 course)

Each of these proposed changes would have an impact on how students schedule and plan their courses. The CRC believes that both individually and collectively, these changes will have a positive impact on students' experience and progress in the Core. Each recommendation would also have an impact on faculty teaching courses and the departments offering Core courses; again it is our full expectation that the impact will primarily benefit faculty in terms of student engagement and departments in terms of more predictable enrollments.

In developing these recommendations, subcommittees of the CRC considered the two changes to actual Core requirements; in the case of the diversity requirement, the subcommittee included faculty from outside the CRC and student members of the Coalition for Cultural Competency. Each recommendation was then discussed and approved by the full CRC. The full CRC then considered the overall effect of these changes on students, faculty, and departments. Because of the interactions of the changes, the CRC feels it is critically important to offer these recommendations for consideration as a group. Also, we believe it will greatly improve the student experience, as well as maximize the positive impact on the faculty and departments by implementing all of the changes simultaneously rather than in a piecemeal fashion. We propose that if approved, the changes to the Core would be implemented for students entering Rutgers in Fall 2019. This will allow sufficient time for departments to address any necessary

changes in course offerings, as well as for the SAS Office of Undergraduate Education to update administrative processes and systems and to revise advising tools.

PROPOSAL FOR ADDITION OF A DIVERSITY REQUIREMENT TO THE CORE CURRICULUM

Overview: Rutgers is an exceptionally diverse campus and yet students are not required to engage in questions and challenges relating to diverse environments in any systematic way, particularly as diversities relate to and are reinforced by social inequalities. The CEC recommended adding a diversity requirement to the Core based on support from both faculty and students. Many faculty spoke in favor of such a requirement at the SAS Town Hall to discuss the CEC report, and wrote individually to the CEC. The Task Force on Diversity and Inclusion, which included both faculty and students, also recommended implementing a diversity requirement, although they did not make specific recommendations. Two student groups, the Rutgers University Student Assembly (RUSA) and the Coalition for Cultural Competency (CCC) have also argued for a diversity requirement; in both cases these groups made specific recommendations for the nature of the requirement. The survey and focus groups conducted by the CEC also showed general student support for a diversity requirement, although perhaps tempered by concern about adding additional requirements to the Core Curriculum. Adding a diversity requirement would align Rutgers SAS with most of our peer institutions in the Big 10; of the thirteen schools we surveyed, eleven had a diversity requirement of some kind, and one had passed a recommendation to explore such a requirement. The CRC strongly supports the addition of a diversity requirement to the Core Curriculum. The proposed diversity requirement would require students to take a course that confronts our diverse world by gaining a better understanding of the existence of diverse experiences *and* understanding and analyzing those experiences in the context of imbalances of power and social systems.

Recommendation: Modify the Contemporary Challenges section of the Core Curriculum to recognize issues of diversity and social justice and ensure that students will take at least one course dealing with these contemporary challenges during their academic career.

We propose to divide Contemporary Challenges into Contemporary Challenges: Diversities and Social Inequalities, and Contemporary Challenges: Our Common Future, with students required to take one three- or four-credit course in each category. The Diversities and Social Inequalities requirement would have the following learning goals:

- Analyze the degree to which forms of human differences and stratifications among social groups shape individual and group experiences of, and perspectives on, contemporary issues. Such differences and stratifications may include race, language, religion, ethnicity, country of origin, gender identity, sexual orientation, economic status, abilities, or other social distinctions and their intersections.

- Analyze contemporary social justice issues and unbalanced social power systems.

Comparison to existing Core: The new diversity category would alter the current Contemporary Challenges category in the following ways:

Current (≥6 credits)	Proposed (≥6 credits; one three- or four-credit course in each category)	
Contemporary Challenges	**CC: Diversities and Social Inequalities (1 course)**	**CC: Our Common Future (1 course)**
a. Analyze the degree to which forms of human difference shape a person's experiences of and perspectives on contemporary issues.	1. Analyze the degree to which forms of human differences and stratifications among social groups shape individual and group experiences of, and perspectives on, contemporary issues. Such differences and stratifications may include race, language, religion, ethnicity, country of origin, gender identity, sexual orientation, economic status, abilities, or other social distinctions and their intersections.	1 (formerly b). Analyze a contemporary global issue from a multi-disciplinary perspective.
b. Analyze a contemporary global issue from a multidisciplinary perspective.	2. Analyze contemporary social justice issues and unbalanced social power systems.	2 (formerly c). Analyze the relationship that science and technology have to a contemporary social issue.
c. Analyze the relationship that science and technology have to a contemporary social issue.		
d. Analyze contemporary issues of social justice		

Rationale: The CRC recommends placing the diversity requirement within Contemporary Challenges for two reasons. First, issues related to diversity and social justice are critical contemporary challenges, in the United States and globally. Second, two of the goals in this category (a and d) already touch on issues of diversity and social justice, and the courses certified in these areas will provide a strong base on which to build this requirement. The CRC discussed the possibility of a two-course requirement, as suggested by the student groups. Although a two-course requirement would be desirable in terms of allowing for both a US and a global course, it would mean that either the total number of courses in the Core would be increased, or that we eliminate other areas in the Contemporary Challenges category. We are recommending a one course requirement within Contemporary Challenges for two reasons. First, we recognize the complexity that scheduling required courses presents for our students, and believe it is important not to add additional course requirements to the Core Curriculum. Additionally, adding more courses would not affect all students equally, and would be most problematic for students who do not enter with multiple AP credits or whose placement requires them to take E credit courses. Although the CRC initially felt that a second diversity requirement might replace the ITR requirement, removal of this requirement from the Core does not really "free up" a course for most students (see

below). Secondly, many of the other issues addressed in Contemporary Challenges to meet goals b and c are also critical issues for our society and we believe it is important for our students to be exposed to these issues. In fact, some students have recently proposed to the Vice Chancellor of Undergraduate Academic Affairs, a requirement for taking a course on sustainability, which aligns with current goal c. In addition, the members of the CRC felt strongly that that an academic diversity requirement should only be considered one part of the training our students receive in understanding diversity and social inequality. We believe it is equally important to develop co-curricular programs and activities that build on the understanding that students will develop in the classroom.

Impact on Departments: The CRC has reviewed the courses currently certified for the Contemporary Challenge goals (a) and (d) and believes that most will also qualify for certification under the new Diversities and Social Inequalities goals**.** During Fall 2018, the CRC will review these courses in detail and work with departments to adapt courses, if need be, to meet the new requirements. Beyond already existing courses, the committee hopes that departments will take the opportunity to develop courses that help students understand the intersection between diversity and inequality in the United States, specifically, and all over the world more generally. This proposal will not affect courses currently certified for goals b and c, although there may be some small shifts in enrollment patterns.

PROPOSAL TO SUNSET ITR REQUIREMENT

Overview: The current *Information and Technology Research (ITR)* requirement states that:
> *Students must take one degree credit-bearing course that meets one or both of these goals.*
>> y.   Employ current technologies to access and evaluate information, to conduct research, and to communicate findings.
>> aa.   Understand the principles that underlie information systems.

In recommending a re-evaluation of the ITR requirement, the CEC noted that the central issue of this requirement should be equipping students with the ability to critically evaluate information, not to be able to use or understand technology. Information technology has progressed so rapidly and made such deep inroads into the way we teach and do research that it no longer is necessary to have a requirement aimed at increasing student exposure to technology. Throughout the curriculum, students use technology to access course material, interact with instructors and classmates, and conduct research. The CRC agrees that it is the critical evaluation of information that is the central element of this goal, and that such evaluation should have a place in the Core, but that it is no longer necessary to retain a category related to information technology.

Recommendation: Sunset ITR as a Core Curriculum requirement.

Rationale: The component of the ITR goals focused on accessing and evaluating information is covered in the Writing in the Disciplines (WCd) goal: "Communicate effectively in modes appropriate to a discipline or area of inquiry; *evaluate and critically assess sources and use the conventions of attribution and citation correctly*; and analyze and synthesize information and ideas from multiple sources to generate new insights." In addition, most major programs have required "methods" or "research" courses that have evaluating information from different sources, conducting research, and communicating findings, as their central learning goals. In fact, many of the courses certified for ITR are these types of courses, which are aimed at students in specific majors rather than at the broader student body. The components of the ITR goals focused on the use of technology are no longer

necessary with the wide range of technologies students are exposed to everyday, inside and outside the classroom. Courses currently certified for ITR which focus on the impact of technology might also be appropriate under Contemporary Challenges goal c.

Impact on Students: The elimination of the ITR requirement will have little effect on most students in terms of the number of required courses or on student learning. For example, for students from SAS, RBS, and SEBS who graduated in 2017, only one-third took just a single ITR course; the remainder either took more than one course or were transfer students with an associate's degree who did not need to complete the Core. Of the students who took a single ITR course, at least half took courses, such as statistics courses, which are requirements for many majors. Since many ITR courses satisfy major or minor requirements, many students end up taking more than one ITR course as they meet the requirements for their degrees. However, this also means that removing the ITR requirement does not actually remove a course requirement, at least for most students. For this reason, the CRC did not propose replacing the ITR requirement with a second diversity course requirement.

Impact on departments: With a few exceptions, the CRC does not anticipate that courses certified for ITR will experience significant decreases in demand if ITR is eliminated. As noted above, many ITR courses are required courses for major or minor programs, and do not attract students who are simply satisfying the ITR requirement. Additionally, many ITR courses are also certified for other Core Curriculum goals; in fact, only 19 courses are certified only for ITR. Most of these courses are targeted at specific majors (for example, Introduction to Molecular Biology and Biochemistry Research) or unlikely to be taken only to satisfy an ITR requirement (for example, Multivariable Calculus). The CRC will work with the departments offering the handful of courses that might be adversely affected by the elimination of the ITR requirement to develop other aspects of these courses. As described above, most if not all, of these courses can be re-certified in other goals, such as WCd and the CC goals.

PROPOSAL TO LIMIT THE NUMBER OF GOALS FOR WHICH A COURSE MAY BE CERTIFIED

Overview: The 20 learning goals currently included in the Core Curriculum are distributed in 7 categories (see Table 1), each of which requires students to take 1 to 3 courses that meet 1 or more of the goals in that category. For students, the critical factor in completing the Core is selecting an appropriate number of courses within each category, for example, two courses which meet at least two of the four goals in Arts and Humanities (AH, o,p,q,r). From a student point of view, the number of learning goals is not critical, but completing the courses in each category is critical. Accordingly, students try to take courses which meet goals in more than one category, and those courses that are certified for goals in three or more categories are particularly sought after. Students often choose courses solely because they meet the goals in three or more categories, and these courses fill quickly, so that many students wait several semesters before being able to take one of these courses. Anecdotal evidence suggests that by the time they take these courses, they may already have satisfied goals in at least one category in another course.

From the faculty point of view, each learning goal a course is certified for must both be "front and center" in the course and assessed each semester. By limiting the number of goals for which a course may be certified, faculty will be better able to devote sufficient time to each goal and to do thoughtful assessments. In addition, we expect this proposed change will reduce the number of students registering for courses based solely on the number of requirements they meet rather than interest in the course material, thus improving the teaching environment for faculty and other students.

Recommendation: Core courses will not be certified for goals in more than two student facing categories.

Rationale: Many courses currently in the Core have been certified for multiple goals that may satisfy one to four requirements in the student facing categories. This creates a system where the number of categories a course satisfies is a major factor in course choice, as clearly indicated by the students in the CEC focus groups. Limiting the number of categories a course could be certified for would reduce the gaming of the system by students, and encourage course choice on other bases. Combined with improved advising, this would help ensure that students explore their interests through the Core, rather than simply looking for easy ways to complete the Core.

Impact on students: Although the CRC believes it is clearly desirable that students make choices among Core courses based on their interests, we also recognize that issues of scheduling are critical, and it is important that many courses meet goals in two categories. The CEC surveys showed that 60% of students completed the Core in fewer than 8 courses; this would still be possible if courses were limited to certification for goals in two student facing categories (if each course met goals in only a single category the Core would require 14 courses). Many students also meet one or more categories through their majors; most students probably meet goals in at least one of the "Areas of Inquiry," ITR (see above), and Writing and Communication (WCd) within their majors. In fact, the CEC data showed that many students in the biological sciences, physical sciences, and social sciences complete the Core in fewer than five courses outside their major and minor requirements. Thus, our data suggests that removing one goal from those Core courses that meet three goals will not have a significant deleterious effect on students in credit-intensive majors and the social sciences. It is harder to assess the impact on students in the humanities majors which are less structured; however, these majors are less credit intensive, and therefore allow for more flexibility for students in taking Core and elective courses. For these students, the most challenging areas of the Core are the natural sciences and quantitative and ITR goals, and most courses in these areas already meet goals in two categories.

Impact on faculty: From the point of view of faculty, limiting the number of goals would reduce the assessment requirements, and allow faculty to focus on fewer goals. In addition, we anticipate an improvement in the teaching environment as students will be less likely to register for courses based solely on the number requirements a course meets rather than course content.

Impact on departments: There are only 10 courses which are certified for goals in three or more categories, and of those, only five are designed for annual enrollments over 100. These are the only courses for which the CRC would anticipate a possible effect on enrollment. One of these courses has ITR as the third category, so the retirement of this goal would remove one category in any case. Another course that is certified for CC, ITR, QQ, and QR is less problematic since ITR will be retired, and QQ and QR are both goals within Quantitative and Formal Reasoning, which requires two courses; this makes it less likely that students take this course simply to meet multiple goals. For the remaining courses, the CRC will work with the departments to reevaluate the courses and emphasize the goals that are most likely to maintain reasonable student enrollment.

PROPOSAL TO REQUIRE CORE COURSES TO BE OFFERED ON A REGULAR SCHEDULE

Overview: Students face many challenges both in scheduling courses and in making decisions among the extensive course offerings in the Core. Students are better able to do this if they can plan courses in advance, both in their majors and in the Core. Academic planning is only possible if students know

when courses will be offered. Although many departments offer majors courses on a regular schedule and publish that information for their students, some Core courses are offered only on an infrequent or unpredictable basis. This makes it difficult for students to plan, and many students in the CEC focus groups expressed frustration that courses listed in the Core were not offered regularly. SAS advisors also report that students frequently ask when courses will be offered during advising appointments. From the perspective of departments, enrollments are more difficult to predict when courses are offered infrequently, making departmental planning more challenging.

Recommendation: Courses certified for the Core must be offered at least every other year, on a regular schedule (for example, fall semester in odd number years).

Rationale: Offering courses on a predictable and regular basis and including that information in lists of courses in Degree Navigator (DN) will allow students to plan their schedules well in advance. Students who are interested in a particular course will be able to hold space for it in their schedules; otherwise, students may elect to give up on a desired course to take something they know is available. If students are better able to plan which courses they will take each semester, they will be able to ensure that they take the necessary courses in the Core and in their majors so that they can graduate on time.   Rutgers-NB has a number of initiatives aimed at improving 4-year graduation rates. These initiatives rely on students, with the help of their advisors, being able to develop 4-year course plans. This proposal, and its timing, dovetails well with these important initiatives.

Impact on departments: We anticipate that the regular offering of courses will result in more stable enrollment numbers as students are better able to schedule courses in which they have an interest. More stable enrollments will better enable departments to plan teaching loads. The CRC recognizes that some departments, especially smaller departments, may have difficulty scheduling all of their courses on a regular basis. Courses included in the Core should be those that have wide appeal and which can normally be offered on a regular basis. In the event that a department is prevented from offering a Core course in a particular academic year due to a faculty leave, assumption of an administrative post, etc., the department can inform the CRC and ask for an exception to the policy to allow the course to remain in the Core.

IMPLEMENTATION

If approved by the faculty, all of the changes proposed here would go into effect for the students entering in Fall 2019. (For new first-year students this would be the class of 2023.) Continuing students would continue to follow the current version of the Core, although they could switch to the new version on request. It is critical that all of the changes described here be implemented simultaneously to limit the number of versions of the Core that are operational at any one time. Phasing in changes would create multiple versions of the Core which would create confusion for students and faculty and create additional work for academic staff.

During the academic year 2018-2019 the CRC will prepare for implementation of the revised version of the Core by:
- Reviewing courses currently certified for goals a and d in detail and working with departments to adapt courses to meet the new diversity and social inequalities goals.
- Working with departments to modify courses currently certified only for ITR and designed for a broad audience.

- Reviewing courses currently certified for goals in more than two student facing categories and working with departments to select the most appropriate goals to retain.
- Reviewing courses which have not been offered on a predictable basis and working with departments to set up a schedule. Courses which cannot be offered on a predictable basis will be removed from the Core.

APPENDIX A: THE PROPOSED CORE CURRICULUM

*Upon completion of the Core Curriculum **STUDENTS WILL BE ABLE TO:***

CONTEMPORARY CHALLENGES [DSI; OCF]

*Students must take two degree credit-bearing courses and meet at least one goal in **both DSI and OCF**, as follows:*

Diversities and Social Inequalities [DSI] *(3 credits)*

Students must take one degree credit-bearing course that meets one or both of these goals.

DSI-1. Analyze the degree to which forms of human differences and stratifications among social groups shape individual and group experiences of, and perspectives on, contemporary issues. Such differences and stratifications may include race, language, religion, ethnicity, country of origin, gender identity, sexual orientation, economic status, abilities, or other social distinctions and their intersections.

DSI-2. Analyze contemporary social justice issues and unbalanced social power systems.

Our Common Future [OCF] *(3 credits)*

Students must take one degree credit-bearing course that meets one or both of these goals.

OCF-1. Analyze a contemporary global issue from a multidisciplinary perspective.

OCF-2. Analyze the relationship that science and technology have to a contemporary social issue.

AREAS OF INQUIRY

Natural Sciences [NS] *(6 credits)*

Students must take two degree credit-bearing courses that meet one or both of these goals.

NS-1. Understand and apply basic principles and concepts in the physical or biological sciences.

NS-2. Explain and be able to assess the relationship among assumptions, method, evidence, arguments, and theory in scientific analysis.

Historical and Social Analysis [HST; SCL] *(6 credits)*

*Students must take two degree credit-bearing courses and meet **both HST and SCL**, as follows:*

- **Historical Analysis [HST]** *(3 credits)*
  Students must take one degree credit-bearing course that meets one or both of these goals.

HST-1. Explain the development of some aspect of a society or culture over time.

HST-2. Employ historical reasoning to study human endeavors, using appropriate assumptions, methods, evidence, and arguments.

- **Social Analysis [SCL] (3 credits)**
  Students must take one additional degree credit-bearing course that meets one or both of these goals.

SCL-1. Understand different theories about human culture, social identity, economic entities, political systems, and other forms of social organization.

SCL-2. Employ tools of social scientific reasoning to study particular questions or situations, using appropriate assumptions, methods, evidence, and arguments.

Arts and the Humanities [AH] *(6 credits)*

Students must take two degree credit-bearing courses and meet at least two of these goals.

AHo. Examine critically philosophical and other theoretical issues concerning the nature of reality, human experience, knowledge, value, and/or cultural production.

AHp. Analyze arts and/or literatures in themselves and in relation to specific histories, values, languages, cultures, and technologies.

AHq. Understand the nature of human languages and their speakers.

AHr. Engage critically in the process of creative expression.

COGNITIVE SKILLS AND PROCESSES

Writing and Communication [WCR; WCD] *(9 credits)*

*Students must take three degree credit-bearing courses, and meet both **WCR** and **WCD** as follows:*

- *All students must take 01:355:101 or its equivalent.*

- *Students must take one additional credit-bearing course focused on revision that meets this goal:*

WCR. Communicate complex ideas effectively, in standard written English, to a general audience, and respond effectively to editorial feedback from peers, instructors, &/or supervisors through successive drafts & revision.

- *Students must also take one additional credit-bearing course focused on writing in a specific discipline that meets this goal:*

WCD. Communicate effectively in modes appropriate to a discipline or area of inquiry; evaluate and critically assess sources and use the conventions of attribution and citation correctly; and analyze and synthesize information and ideas from multiple sources to generate new insights.

Quantitative and Formal Reasoning [QQ; Q] *(6 credits)*

Students must take two degree credit-bearing courses and meet both of these goals.

QQ.   Formulate, evaluate, and communicate conclusions and inferences from quantitative information. *(includes various quantitative methods courses as well as 640 courses)*

QR.   Apply effective and efficient mathematical or other formal processes to reason and to solve problems. *(includes 640 courses and formal reasoning courses)*