State of the Core Report June 2016
Office of the Associate Dean for the Core
Boston College

For Distribution

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1. Executive Summary

This is the first annual State of the Core Report generated by the new Office of the Associate Dean for the Core on behalf of the University Core Renewal Committee (UCRC), both created in 2015. Because it is the inaugural report, it goes into considerable detail on (1) the Core as a whole—providing a map of Core structures and student patterns—and (2) student and faculty experience of two new types of interdisciplinary courses—Complex Problems and Enduring Questions—offered in 2015–2016 in the first of a three-year Core Renewal pilot program. The report also discusses the activities of the Office of the Associate Dean and the UCRC, and concludes with analysis and considerations. This document has been inestimably aided by the superb work of the Office of Institutional Research, Planning, & Assessment, whose executive summaries immediately follow this one and whose evaluations form the bulk of the Addenda. General conclusions include:

• *Core Structure*
  – Overall stability and perhaps stasis.
  – Considerable variation across departments in class sizes, numbers of Core courses and credit hours, and who teaches the Core.
  – Somewhat more information available for English, History, Philosophy, and Theology.
  – Progress with respect to assessment in advance of the 2017 NEASC accreditation visit.

• *Student Experience*
  – Student appreciation that the Core accomplishes general education, but also evidence that it needs improvement with respect to intellectual engagement and personal development.
  – Most Boston College students complete most Core requirements in the first two years at BC through a combination of Core courses and Advanced Placement/transfer credit.
  – The impact of Advanced Placement credit and study abroad on the Core is not yet fully understood.

• *Core Renewal*
  – Since 2012, accomplishments of Core Renewal include a new Core vision statement, administrative structures, and a 2015–2018 interdisciplinary pilot course program for first-year students.
  – Initial assessment for AY16 pilot courses suggests overall success—they seem to be accomplishing what they are intended to do—as well as room for improvement and continued development.
  – Students in pilot courses expressed the relevance of the classes, their intellectual engagement in them, and the experience of what others will recognize as the Mission of Boston College.
  – Faculty noted overall that these classes were more work but more rewarding than others they typically teach, leading to more meaningful student-teacher relationships and sense of community. Students tended to be "strong, eager, and engaged."
  – As with any new program, there have breakthroughs and also challenges. Lessons learned in the first year have already been applied to the second year.

For further information, including foundational documents, visit the Core website: www.bc.edu/core.

CORE CURRICULUM DATA ANALYSIS
2015-2016
Executive Summary

Over the course of the 2015-2016 academic year, the office of Institutional Research, Planning and Assessment reviewed and analyzed data relating to Boston College's Core Curriculum. The analyses were presented in a number of reports, which are each described below.

Core Curriculum Analysis Report (October 2015)

This report described number of Core courses and the total student credit hours (SCH) offered between AY2011 and AY2015, including the course's home department and the course size (number of students enrolled). The data showed that there has been a slight decrease (-6%) in the number of Core course sections offered in the last five years, but an even smaller decrease (-2) in the number of SCH taught. As suggested by those numbers, the average size of Core course sections increased slightly (+4%) during that same time. The Core Curriculum Analysis Report also looked at the rank of individuals teaching Core courses and found that Supplemental Faculty taught nearly half of all Core course sections (Part-time faculty taught 28% of all Core sections; Teaching Fellows taught another 20%). Full-time Non-Tenure Track faculty taught about 27% of all sections, and ranked faculty (Professors, Associate Professors, and Assistant Professors) taught the remaining 20% of all Core course sections offered.

This report also analyzed the semesters in which students tended to take Core courses. By examining the records of the Class of 2015, we found that the majority of students complete the bulk of their Core courses during their first two years (or through AP): 87% of the Class of 2015 completed 10 or more Core requirements before the start of Junior Year, and more than half (54%) completed 12 or more in that time. On average, graduates of the Class of 2015 completed 11.5 Core requirements in their first two years. A sizeable portion of the class fulfilled Core requirements by earning qualifying scores on AP exams: 34% fulfilled their Writing requirement through AP; 32% fulfilled Literature; 29% fulfilled Mathematics; 29% fulfilled one Natural Science requirement; and 29% fulfilled one Social Science requirement.

Results from *The Freshman Survey* (March 2016)

Analysis of *The Freshmen Survey* (TFS), which collects a range of demographic data and information about students' attitudes, experiences, goals and values, found that students who participated in the 2015-2016 Core Renewal Pilot Courses differed from all other Boston College freshmen on several measures, suggesting that there is some degree of "self-selection" among this initial cohort. Core Renewal participants, on average, scored higher than their peers on measures of Civic Engagement, Pluralistic Orientation, Social Agency, and Likelihood of College Involvement. These same students, on average, scored significantly lower on measures of Academic Self-Concept, and College Reputation Orientation.

Core Curriculum Dashboard (April 2016)

The Dashboard details the number of course sections, the number of students enrolled in each section, the number of SCH taught, and the rank of the instructor(s) of each Core course section. These data are presented in the Dashboard by Core Area and by Department. This iteration of the Dashboard was provided in an Excel file, and will serve as a prototype for the development of an interactive Dashboard in the future. This report was updated in May 2016 to show the breakdown of SCH by department within Core areas, and to graphically illustrate the data by SCH rather than number of course sections.

Core Curriculum Department Profiles (April 2016)

Department Profiles were prepared for the English, History, Philosophy and Theology departments. These profiles look at Core courses in the context of all courses taught by the particular department. The reports illustrate Core courses as a percentage of all courses taught in the department, and among faculty of the various ranks.

CORE RENEWAL PILOT COURSE ASSESSMENTS
2015-2016
Executive Summary

Nine Core Renewal pilot courses or course pairs were offered in the 2015-2016 academic year: three Complex Problems (CP) courses and six Enduring Questions (EQ) course pairs. 13% of the freshman class enrolled in a Core Renewal pilot course in 2015-2016. Table 1 (Page 2) includes course, faculty, and enrollment information.

Pilot courses were assessed through a series of faculty focus groups/interviews and student surveys at the end of each semester. Major themes and findings are summarized below. Detailed data analysis is provided in the survey and focus group reports.

Strengths

- **Positive overall student response**
  - Students demonstrated agreement with most survey questions, especially those that focused on course content and intellectual engagement.
  - Most students would recommend a Core Renewal course to other first year students.
- **Positive overall faculty response**
  - Faculty were impressed with student engagement.
  - Faculty reflected that they would teach this type of course again.
- **Small class size and restriction to first-year students**
  - Enduring Questions faculty commented that the small class size supported engagement, reflection and the ability to structure robust experiences.
  - Faculty noted that freshmen were uniquely engaged in these types of courses, in contrast to a "check this off the list of requirements" attitude prevalent among upperclassmen.
  - Students identified the small class size as one of the "most valuable" aspects of the course.

Challenges

- **Reflection component requires further definition to ensure consistency of experience**
  - Reflection sessions were given varying levels of emphasis and used in notably different ways depending on the course.
  - Faculty raised the concern that designated "reflection" times imply a lack of integrated reflection.
  - Faculty need further support to operationalize outside facilitators (Mission and Ministry) effectively.
- **High workload**
  - Faculty, TA's and students all highlighted the level of effort required by these courses, above what is expected for the same number of credits for other Core courses.
  - Students and TA's noted the significant time required for "outside of class" experiences, including travel and client-facing time for some lab projects.
  - Faculty noted the need for continued financial and structural administrative support for both the design and execution of these courses.
- **Outcomes and experiences differ by course topic**
  - Course topic and faculty have major impact on the student experience and how students evaluate their experience as aligned to several key goals (reflecting on the role of religious faith, gaining analytical skills, being encouraged to think about future plans).

- Experience and outcomes may be less standardized than in other Core courses unless course objectives are centrally defined and calibrated.

➢ **Sustainability/growth**

- Finding faculty matches will be a challenge as the program grows. Topics should work together and faculty work styles must also be complementary.
- Courses should not be interdisciplinary for the sake of being interdisciplinary. CP/EQ courses should fundamentally support the goals of the Core curriculum.
- "Boutique" factor diminishes as program expands. The self-selection of students into the courses was a factor important to student engagement and success, according to faculty. Likewise, faculty enthusiasm to be part of a novel approach could be diluted as more faculty are recruited to participate to meet demand.

Table 1: Core Renewal Pilot Courses 2015-2016

Core Category	Course Name (Course Number)	Instructors	Semester Offered	# Enrolled
Complex Problems	**Global Implications of Climate Change** (SOCY150101/EESC150101)	Brian Gareau Tara Pisani Gareau	Fall 2015	74
Complex Problems	**Understanding Race, Gender and Violence** (HIST150301/SOCY150301)	Marilynn Johnson Shawn McGuffey	Fall 2015	77
Enduring Questions	**Truth-Telling in Literature** (ENGL170101) **Truth-Telling in History** (HIST170101)	Allison Adair Sylvia Sellers-Garcia	Fall 2015	16
Enduring Questions	**Humans, Nature and Creativity** (ENGL170301) **Inquiring About Humans and Nature** (PHIL170301)	Min Song Holly Vande Wall	Fall 2015	18
Enduring Questions	**Reading the Body** (ENGL170201) **The Body in Sickness and Health** (SOCY170201)	Laura Tanner Jane Ashley	Fall 2015	19
				Fall Total = 204
Complex Problems	**Genocide and Crimes Against Humanity** (HIST1501/ENGL1501)	Maxim Shrayer Devin Pendas	Spring 2016	76
Enduring Questions	**Epidemics, Disease and Humanity** (BIOL1701) **Devising Theatre: Disease as Metaphor** (THTR1701)	Kathleen Dunn Scott Cummings	Spring 2016	15
Enduring Questions	**Power, Justice, War: The Ancients** (POLI1701) **Power, Justice, War: The Moderns** (PHIL1701)	Robert Bartlett Aspen Brinton	Spring 2016	17
Enduring Questions	**Spiritual Exercises: Engagement, Empathy, Ethics** (THEO1701) **Aesthetic Exercises: Engagement, Empathy, Ethics** (MUSA1701)	Brian Robinette Daniel Callahan	Spring 2016	15
				Spring Total = 123

Note: One student enrolled in both a CP course and an EQ course pair in the fall. Twenty-nine students enrolled in pilot courses in both the fall and the spring.

2. Introduction and Background

Resting at the heart of a Boston College undergraduate education, the Core Curriculum establishes broad, foundational knowledge and skills. It looks both to the past traditions of Jesuit education, and, through recent efforts at renewal and revitalization, toward the future of liberal arts general education in the twenty-first century. The Core is a fifteen-course (at least 45-credit) set of general education requirements all undergraduates complete prior to graduation. It is the only university-wide academic program for the Morrissey College of Arts and Sciences, the Carroll School of Management, the Connell School of Nursing, and the Lynch School of Education. The Core consists of one course in Arts, one course in Cultural Diversity, two courses in History, one course in Literature, one course in Mathematics, two courses in Natural Sciences, two courses in Philosophy, two courses in Social Sciences, two courses in Theology, and one course in Writing. Twenty-two different Morrissey College of Arts and Sciences departments and programs contribute to the Core with variation in how large a place it occupies in their course offerings.

The present structure of the Boston College Core has existed since 1991. The 1991 Core plan emphasized the pursuit of "coherence," "introduction to the fundamental concepts and methods of scholarly investigation of the disciplines," and the Jesuit, Catholic commitment to "the reflective interplay of what one understands and believes with how one acts, especially in the service of others." Until 2015 the faculty University Core Development Committee approved new courses for Core credit. There were no significant changes to the Core as a whole between the early 1990s and 2012, when a process of renewing the Core Curriculum began. Renewal was warranted out of a pervasive sense that many students and faculty had come to be disengaged from the Core. That process has thus far yielded an integrative vision statement, a 2015–2018 pilot course program, and since July 2015 new administrative structures—the Office of the Associate Dean for the Core and the University Core Renewal Committee (UCRC). The 2014 Vision Animating the Boston College Core Curriculum reaffirmed the importance of BC's Jesuit, Catholic traditions to the Core and established common, cross-departmental liberal arts learning outcomes. On Core Renewal Pilot Courses—innovative interdisciplinary classes for first-year students—see part 4 (p. 14). On the Office of the Associate Dean for the Core and UCRC see part 5 (p. 23).

Faculty and instructors in the Morrissey College of Arts and Sciences teach the vast majority of Core courses. Some Core courses are intended for non-majors with no secondary application; others serve as introductions to or requirements for majors. In some departments graduate students teach Core classes as part of their training and professional formation. The Cultural Diversity Core requirement is unique in its ability to "double count"; it may be fulfilled by a course that also counts for Core, major, or elective credit. The professional schools have some distinctive Core requirements and special programs (e.g., the Carroll School of Management Portico program), and the Morrissey College of Arts and Sciences offers some programmatic options for fulfilling the Core (e.g., Honors, Perspectives, Pulse, and now the Core Renewal Pilot Courses).

With a few exceptions (e.g., the First-Year Writing Seminar, Perspectives, and the Carroll School Portico program) students may take Core classes at any time and in any order during their four years at Boston College. They are also able to apply Advanced Placement, International

Baccalaureate, etc., credit toward the fulfillment of most Core requirements (except Philosophy, Theology, and Cultural Diversity, for which there are no AP, etc. equivalents). Furthermore, some students fulfill Core requirements while studying abroad, typically during their junior year. Majors with prerequisites and firm pathways lead some undergraduates to enroll in Core classes throughout their Boston College career, while most students tend to complete most Core requirements during their first two years.

3. Map of the Core

a. Structures and Assessment

Until now we have known very little about the overall shape of the Core, both in terms of how it functions systematically and how students experience it. It is important to note at the outset that in a basic sense the Core "works" in a serviceable way. Departments contribute, classes are scheduled, and students graduate. It establishes a broad-based liberal arts foundation that complements the major. Students, as we will see, generally agree that Core classes introduce them to the basic methods and knowledge of particular disciplines. However, more generally, with no office at the helm until 2015 and thus with no direct administrative oversight and coordination, the Core has drifted over past decades. Departments approach the Core in a variety of ways, and it plays very different roles in their cultures and curricular offerings. The pursuit of greater engagement, deeper integration, and connection to the BC Mission requires better understanding of how the Core actually operates. We need a map of the Core, its structures, and students' experience of it.

Stability

IRPA was able to distinguish patterns in the overall structure of the Core.[1] Over the past five years (AY11–AY15), the size of the Core has been generally stable, approximate 100,000 credit hours/year. During this time, a slight decrease in the overall number of classes has been accompanied by a mild increase in average class size (4%, from 35.9 to 37.2 students/class, although median class size has held at 26 students/class) (Analysis Memo, p. 26 below). *Stability is a mixed blessing: it reflects coherence and consistency while at the same time indicating possible inertia and stasis.*

Variation in department credit hours

Beyond overall stability, there is tremendous variety in class size as well as in department and instructor contributions to the Core. Of the twenty-two departments that furnish the Core, each year some teach as few as one class and others teach more than one hundred and fifty. Departments that contribute to the following Core requirements tend to teach smaller-sized classes: Arts, Literature, Philosophy, Theology, and Writing. Classes for other Core requirements tend to be larger: History, Mathematics, Natural Science, and Social Science. Because class size varies, that fact that a department may teach more Core courses than another does not necessarily result in more credit hours. Credit hours are the common currency for evaluating labor. For instance, over the past five years, departments in the Social Sciences taught 16% of Core credit hours while only teaching 8% of Core classes, whereas English taught only 9% of Core credit

[1] Appendices 7.a.i. Boston College Core Curriculum Data Analysis Memo, and 7.a.ii. Core Dashboard. Cultural Diversity courses were not included in this analysis due to their distinctively difficult-to-track profile; nor were 0-credit discussion groups and 1-credit labs, masking somewhat the amount of instructor labor.

hours while teaching 18% of Core classes (Analysis Memo, p. 27). More specifically, the Social Sciences (four departments teaching two Core requirements) provide the largest number of credit hours (AY12–16 average of 16,794/year), followed by the Natural Sciences (four departments contributing 13,765/year), History (one department teaching two Core requirements at 11,418/year), and Mathematics (one department teaching one Core requirement at 10,156). Among Social Science departments, Economics taught the most Core credit hours (6,749), followed by Psychology (4,157) and Sociology (3,946). Among Natural Science departments, Earth and Environmental Sciences taught the most credit hours (5,400), followed by Chemistry (4,515) and Physics (2,945) (Dashboard, pp. 33–34).

Class sizes

During the past five years, 61% of Core classes enrolled 30 students or less (22% enrolled 15 or less), while only 6% of Core classes enrolled more than 100 students (Core Analysis, p. 28). Pulse, Perspectives, and Writing have the smallest class sizes and thus the largest number of sections. History and the Natural Sciences have the largest average class sizes, and with the exception of those that department and cluster of departments, most BC students seem to fulfill the Core in classes with enrollments less than 45/class (Dashboard, p. 34). *Variation in Core class sizes need not be cause for alarm. There are different models—lecture and discussion—for effective teaching. The principal question to ask is: Is each department organizing its Core courses in ways that balance efficiency and fairness with the overall aims of a general liberal arts education?*

Faculty teaching Core classes

Among the more surprising findings was that in AY11–AY15 only 20% of Core classes were taught by ranked faculty (Full, Associate, and Assistant Professors), whereas 75% were taught by supplemental faculty (graduate student Teaching Fellows, Part-time Faculty, and Full-time Non-Tenure Track Faculty). From fall 2011 through spring 2016 ranked faculty accounted for 30% of Core credit hours because they tend to teach larger courses. More specifically, Teaching Fellows and Part-time Faculty staff the vast majority of Core courses in Writing (86% of credit hours), Philosophy (86%) and Arts (70% across three departments). Ranked faculty teach the highest percentage of Core credit hours in the natural sciences (55%) and social sciences (52%). They teach the lowest percentage of Core credit hours in Theology (9%), Philosophy (5%), and FWS (1%). The 41% of Theology Core credit hours that are team-taught need to be understood better (Core Analysis, pp. 28–29; Dashboard, p. 33). *Job classification is obviously no indication of the quality of teaching. Many excellent part-time faculty and full-time tenure-track have taught at Boston College for many years. We know very little about the level and experience of graduate student teaching across the Core, since it varies tremendously from department to department. Again, the numbers above do not include 0- and 1-credit sections. Regardless, linking research-active faculty to undergraduate liberal arts general education should be a priority because students are distinctly served and uniquely prepared when knowledge creation and knowledge transmission intersect directly.*

Four Departments: English, History, Philosophy, Theology

Chart 1 shows more detailed information on the departments responsible for two-course

Core requirements: English, History, Philosophy, Theology.[2] Comparison among departments is hindered by the different ways departments organize instructional time, above all with graduate students. Information on chart 1 is for five-year averages between AY12–AY16.

In Philosophy and Theology, Core courses make up the highest percentage of both the departments' total courses taught and total credit hours. In English they amount to about half of courses taught and of credit hours. In History the incongruity between the number of Core as a percentage of total courses taught (28%) and the number of credit hours (62%) results from large lecture courses. Fewer ranked faculty (Professor, Associate Professor, Assistant Professor) teach Core classes in History (27%) than in the other three departments, with Theology at the high end with 63%. In all four departments virtually all full-time non-tenure track faculty teach the Core. A majority of Core classes are taught by supplemental faculty in English (68%), Theology (56%), and Philosophy (52%). In History this number is reduced by the greater reliance on full-time non-tenure track faculty (postdoctoral fellows), who teach 41% of Core courses.

Chart 1. Core Percentages in Four Departments AY12–AY16

	English	History	Philosophy	Theology
Core as % of courses taught in dept	52%	28%	72%	61%
Core as % of credit hours taught in dept	53%	62%	77%	74%
% of total fac who teach Core	72%	61%	72%	77%
% of ranked fac who teach Core	47%	27%	50%	63%
Core as % of courses taught by ranked fac	10%	27%	21%	24%
% of FT non-TT who teach Core	98%	86%	97%	97%
Core as % of courses taught by FT non-TT	22%	41%	27%	19%
% of supp fac who teach Core	83%	88%	80%	84%
Core as % of courses taught by supp fac	68%	32%	52%	56%

[2] A small number of Literature Core courses are taught by Classics, German Studies, Romance Languages and Literatures, and Slavic & Eastern Languages and Literatures.

There are differences in the average size of Core classes according to department (all large History Cores also include smaller discussion sections of less than 20):

Chart 2. Average Core class size AY12–AY16

	English	History	Philosophy	Theology
Avg Core class size	19.6	99.80	26.0	32.70

Assessment and E-1-A Forms

The 2007 NEASC accreditation report and the 2010 interim report had observed the need to improve the assessment of the Core. Progress is being made. During the 2015–2016 academic year the Associate Dean for the Core asked departments and clusters of departments that contribute to the Core to revisit the 1991 descriptions of Core requirements in light of (1) the 2014 Vision Animating the Boston College Core, which had spelled out common, cross-disciplinary learning goals, and (2) changes in disciplinary knowledge over the past twenty-five years. Conversations that generated draft restatements furthered reflection within departments on the purpose and value of the Core. When finalized, these descriptions will serve as criteria both for ongoing Core assessment and for the consideration of new Core course proposals. In late May 2016 for the first time, all departments and programs in MCA&S that contribute to the Core submitted E-1-A forms that describe the processes and, if available, results of assessment of Core classes and programs. The previous chair of the University Core Development Committee, Father Arthur Madigan, S.J., had worked very hard to put Core assessment in motion. The AY2016 Core E-1-A forms, which contribute to preparation for the 2017 NEASC accreditation visit, are available on the BC Core website (www.bc.edu/core). Finally, Core Renewal pilot courses discussed below have created an opportunity to build assessment (both of program viability and of student learning outcomes) from the ground up.

Significant progress has been made in Core assessment since the previous NEASC accreditation visit. While a culture of academic assessment remains embryonic at Boston College, we seem to be on the right track. Assessment is only worthwhile, however, if the knowledge generated is useful to departments and programs in curricular planning and execution. There are also certain fundamental and qualitative aspects of liberal arts general education, especially in a Jesuit, Catholic context, that defy immediate measure. We should continue to consider assessment as a means for departments and programs to ask questions about student learning to which they themselves want meaningful answers.

b. Student Experience

From one point of view, the 1991 Core successfully provides basic liberal arts general education. A significant majority of graduating seniors in 2013 (73%) and 2015 (75%) agreed or strongly agreed that the Core conveyed the substance, method, or key concepts of the Core disciplines.[3] In 2013 CSON students provided the highest mean score on this question (4.00/5.00), and MCA&S

[3] 7.a.iii. BC Undergrad Experience Questionnaire 2013, graphic 1, p. 37, and 7.a.iv. BC Undergrad Experience Survey 2015, p. 40.

students the lowest (3.82/5.00). The judgment that the Core has enabled students to acquire "a broad general education" during their four years received the highest overall mean score (4.29/5.00), whereas students viewed somewhat less favorably the idea that their "education would have been too narrow without exposure to the many disciplines represented in the BC Core" (3.67/5.00).

In 2015 fewer seniors believed that the Core had led them to discover "new intellectual interests" (63%) and "to examine previous assumptions and ideas" (61%). Again Nursing students gave the highest mean score (understood key concepts = 5.17/6.00), whereas Arts and Sciences students gave the lowest (examine previous assumptions and ideas = 4.59/6.00). Overall, understanding key concepts of Core disciplines rated higher (4.87/6.00) than discovering new intellectual interests through the Core (4.61/6.00) and examining previous assumptions and ideas (4.60/6.00). Noteworthy is the fact that, in their qualitative comments, students observed that the Core facilitated exploration and personal growth. They also expressed frustration with the perceived structural restrictiveness of the Core.

With help from Student Services, the Office of the Associate Dean for the Core was able to add four questions to the normal student teaching evaluations in fall 2015 for all English, History, Philosophy, and Theology Core courses and in spring 2016 for all History, Philosophy, and Theology Core courses.[4] The survey yielded a very high rate of return (about 12,000 out of 14,000 student responses, or 86%).

Chart 3. Add-on Questions to Fall 2015 and Spring 2016 Core Student Surveys in Four Departments: Percentage of students who *Strongly Agreed* or *Agreed*.

	Fall 2015	Spring 2016	AY16 Average
After taking this Core course, I understand the basic concepts, methods, and/or content of the course's discipline.	92%	92%	92%
This Core course helped me think differently about other disciplines.	79%	81%	80%
This Core course helped me make connections and integrate what I have learned elsewhere.	83%	83%	84%
My main reason for taking this course was to fulfill a Core requirement.	87%	89%	88%

Results from student surveys indicate the degree to which they tend to experience the Core more as introductions to particular disciplines and less as a formative, integrated liberal arts experience. We should bear in mind the limitations of indirect assessment according to student "customer satisfaction" modeling. While basic foundational knowledge seems to be established, students clearly take Core courses in order to fulfill a requirement, a fact that contributes to a culture of treating the Core as "boxes to check." Nor does the Core seem especially successful

[4] 7.a.v. Add-on Questions to Fall 2015–Spring 2016 Core Student Surveys.

in stimulating new intellectual interests and examining previous assumptions and ideas. Undergraduates appear to have struggled to integrate Core courses in terms of interdisciplinary dialogue. The relationship of the Core to distinctive Jesuit commitments to the formation of the whole person seems to have been experienced unsystematically. The Core Renewal Pilot Courses are addressing these deficiencies.

In addition to gathering students' impressions, we are beginning to see patterns in student experience of the Core. IRPA determined that, during their first two years at Boston College, 87% of the class of 2015 completed 10 or more Core requirements, and 54% completed 12 or more. Students fulfilled an average of 11.5 Core requirements during their freshmen and sophomore years, which means that possibly over 50% of the courses taken in their first two years were Core (Core Analysis, p. 30). Fulfillment transpires through BC Core courses and/or Advanced Placement/transfer equivalences. Usefully, we are also now able to understand somewhat the timing of Core requirement completion. 97% of students of the class of 2015 completed the Writing Core by the end of the their first year (34% AP and 63% First-Year Writing Seminar (FWS)). The Writing Core is clearly designed to achieve this result since classes are restricted to freshmen. Approximately 87% of students complete their Literature and Mathematics requirement by the end of their first year (Literature = 32% AP and 55% Lit Core; Mathematics = 29% AP and 58% Math Core). By the end of sophomore year, most students have fulfilled their Social Science (87%), Philosophy (77%), History (77%), and Theology (76%) Core requirements. Only by the end of junior year did 77% of students complete the Arts Core (Core Analysis, p. 31). *Given the variety of pathways individual students can pursue to completing the Core, and the fact that with the exception of FWS no requirement must be completed by a particular year, it is somewhat surprising that the vast majority of students satisfy most general education requirements in their first two years. Anecdotally, some students and faculty advisers in the natural sciences assert that Core classes must be taken over the course of a student's career, since major requirements and pre-requisites allow for very little flexibility or room for maneuver. The same situation pertains for many students in the professional schools. If possible, it would be useful to know if there are particular patterns to completing the Core according to declared majors (upon entering and at the end of sophomore year). Such knowledge about actual student experience and pathways may prove indispensable in future planning and design of the Core.*

There presently exist no means for an accurate accounting of how many Core requirements students fulfill away from BC—either through Advanced Placement, etc., study abroad, summer classes, or otherwise. At the time they were admitted, the class of 2015 possessed enough AP credits to substitute for 3,811 Core classes. If all those credits were applied—and, again, existing student information systems do not permit exact tallies—then up to 19% of Core requirements for the class of 2015 may have been fulfilled through AP credit. This number would not include Core requirements for which there is no AP equivalent: Cultural Diversity, Philosophy, and Theology. In 2015–2016, the Office of the Associate Dean for the Core received 121 requests for substitutions for the Cultural Diversity Core requirement (92 were approved, 29 were denied). In 2015–2016 Student Services processed 147 study abroad substitutions for Core classes from the class of 2016 alone (Arts = 64, History = 34, Cultural Diversity = 22, Natural Science = 15, Philosophy = 9, Theology = 3, etc.). These numbers do not reflect "pre-approved" classes as listed by the Office of International Programs and determined by individual departments. *The*

Core having evolved organically over time without administrative oversight, we need to understand better how many Core requirements are fulfilled "away" from BC and to make strategic decisions on the question of how many non-BC courses a student can take and still receive a Boston College liberal arts education.

4. Core Renewal

Realizing calls for interdisciplinarity and Core revision in the 2006 strategic plan, Boston College began in 2012 the process of renewing the Core for the first time since 1991. Between 2012 and 2014, BC administrators and faculty envisioned the kind of Core our students need and that fits Boston College's distinctive mission and identity. There have been several warrants for renewing the Core. Some aspirations of the 1991 Core have never been adequately realized. In particular, calls for students to be the primary agents of integration seem to have yielded poor results. Undergraduates appear to have struggled to integrate Core courses both in terms of multi-disciplinary liberal arts synthesis and with respect to the distinctive Jesuit commitment to the formation of the whole person. Over time, the Core has drifted into a set of department- and cluster-based distribution requirements. Although some students have described being unexpectedly transformed by a Core course, there has been a widespread perception that students have tended overall to treat Core courses as "boxes to check" en route to their major(s). Both student and faculty experience of the Core has been inconsistent, and disengagement has crept into the signature program of Boston College liberal arts education.

With the help of consultants from the design consultancy Continuum, a process of broad consultation and creative planning led to the innovative proposal *Toward a Renewed Core* (2013), which provided an initial roadmap for interdisciplinary courses that model meaningful integrative general education. Then-Dean of Arts and Sciences David Quigley, Dean Andy Boynton of the Carroll School, and Professor Mary Crane, Thomas F. Rattigan Professor of English and Director of the Institute for Liberal Arts occupied principal leadership roles in this process. This effort was followed in 2014 by *The Vision Animating the Boston College Core Curriculum* (2014), developed by a committee chaired by then-Interim Dean Father Gregory Kalscheur, S.J., which explicitly grounded Core Renewal in the Jesuit worldview and the principles and practices of the founder of the Society of Jesus, Ignatius Loyola. The Vision Statement identifies common learning outcomes that cut across and unify Core requirements rooted in different departments and clusters of departments. Together, the 2013 curricular proposal and the 2014 vision statement provide the direction for two kinds of interdisciplinary Core courses offered exclusively for first-year students during a three-year pilot period in 2015–2018:

> *Complex Problems* courses are large team-taught, six-credit classes that address a contemporary problem of vital significance. They meet three times a week for joint fifty-minute lectures, once a week for a seventy-five-minute lab, and once a week for a two-hour Reflection session.
>
> *Enduring Questions* courses are linked pairs of distinct three-credit classes of 19 students taught by a faculty member from a different department. Although they meet separately during normal course times, both classes are linked by a common topic and set of questions as well as share some readings and assignments. Four times during the semester

the students and both faculty gather for Reflection sessions.

The Model

Core Renewal Pilot Courses reflect current research on student learning, and they intentionally pursue the opportunities presented by Boston College's Jesuit, Catholic traditions and identity. Interdisciplinary approaches to liberal arts general education model high-level connections between different disciplines and methods, and among students, teachers, and the broader world. Deep learning—as opposed to surface learning—can occur when students are motivated by themes they care about. Complex Problems classes thus address topics of vital, contemporary concern, and Enduring Questions classes examine themes of perennial human significance. In 2015–2017 initial Complex Problems topics include climate change; race, gender, and violence; genocide; creativity and innovation; theater and politics; and film and social problems. Enduring Questions courses have examined and will examine truth-telling; humans and nature; epidemics and theatrical representations of disease; ancient and modern views of power, justice, and war; spiritual and artistic exercises; love, gender, and marriage; the good life; black intimacy; materiality; and adoption, among others. Faculty teach methods, content, and skills more effectively when students are motivated by deep engagement with the topic. Complex Problems labs embrace the emergent pedagogy of problem- and project-based learning, which asks students to produce knowledge as a further means of engagement and integration. Complex Problems and Enduring Questions Pilot Courses intentionally call students' attention not only to what they are learning but to how they are learning and why it matters. Such "metacognitive" ability—the capacity to be aware of how one is learning and that there are varying ways to approach perennial questions and difficult problems—yields long-term benefits.

The innovative Reflection component of the pilot courses enables students to bring together what they are learning with who they are and with what is happening outside of class. Jesuit education has always sought to integrate students' intellectual, affective, and spiritual lives as well as to unite student personhood with meaningful action in the world. In Core Renewal Pilot Course Reflection sessions students are urged to consider how and why learning is relevant to their lives outside the classroom. Examples of this co-curricular programming include teaching students concretely how to reflect through the Ignatian Examen or meditation, inviting speakers from the community, requiring students to attend on-campus conferences and events, taking field trips, and organizing career panels. One class on the body in sickness and health brought students to the Nursing School to demonstrate a birth simulator—an experience that stimulated true conversation. A class in Music attended a BC hockey game in order to observe and listen to the melodies of crowd, ice, and action.

In one Core Renewal class, the faculty organized their reflection sessions around what they called Purposeful Ongoing Discussion, or PODs. Led by upper-class students and each comprised of fifteen students from a Complex Problems class on climate change, the PODs met weekly for peer-to-peer discussion of class material and how it related to students' lives. These groups also achieved a valuable secondary effect: providing first-year students with student mentors who could ease their transition to college. The POD program was developed in collaboration between the Complex Problems faculty and the Office of Mission and Ministry, modeling the kind of connections to which Core Renewal aspires. Altogether, Reflection sessions aim to break down the artificial "fourth wall" of the classroom, leading students to see

Core education as essential to who they are becoming—in the other classes they take, in campus life, and beyond.

Through reflection, labs, classroom instruction, and interdisciplinary collaboration, Core Renewal Pilot Courses establish the kind of unifying integration that has long been a hallmark of Jesuit education: guiding students toward the mature discovery of who they are meant to become as well as leading them to act in the world for others. Core Renewal Pilot Courses explicitly express the Mission of Boston College by embodying our definition of the educated person; they form a substantive and holistic program of general education; and they integrate Core requirements in ways that exemplify engaged liberal arts learning at a Jesuit, Catholic university.

The Pilot Experiment

In 2015–2016, 326 first-year students took these 3 Complex Problems and 6 pairs of Enduring Questions classes. In the 2016–2017 academic year, 747 seats will be available in 5 Complex Problems and 11 pairs of Enduring Questions courses.[5] Over two years this initiative will involve 44 different faculty from 17 different MCA&S departments and two other schools (CSON and CSOM). Faculty who teach the pilots receive a $10,000 stipend and Complex Problems courses count for two courses of a faculty member's normal teaching load (each Enduring Questions course counts for one normal course). In the fall semester faculty submit applications, either in pairs or individually, for classes to be taught the next year. The following spring faculty participate in a series of pedagogical workshops designed to introduce them to the paradigm of Ignatian pedagogy, to acquaint them better with their partners and to the challenges and opportunities of team teaching, and to provide a forum for early development of syllabi. These workshops have been produced in coordination with the Center for Teaching Excellence. A workshop for graduate student Teaching Assistants responsible for Complex Problems labs was also held in August 2015. Promotion of the courses has been aided immensely through the efforts of the Office of Marketing Communication, which produced video interviews with Core pilot faculty and created text materials to be sent to incoming students. Preparation in 2014–2015 for AY16 pilot courses was coordinated by Professor Mary Crane (English), Director of the Institute for Liberal Arts, and Professor Julian Bourg (History), a role they continued in 2015–2016, respectively, as Chair of the Core Renewal Subcommittee of the University Core Renewal Committee, and as Associate Dean for the Core.

a. 2015–2016 Core Renewal Pilot Course Analysis

Our first efforts at appraisal have been focused on program viability—What is working? What should be adapted as we move forward? A distinctive survey was administered to all students who took pilot classes, and focus groups were held with the faculty and teaching assistants who taught them.

i. Students

Demographics and the Freshman Survey

In 2015–2016 more female first-year students took Core pilot courses than males. Female representation in the pilots was also higher then their proportion in the freshman class. The same dynamic held for AHANA students' ratio to white students. Education and Nursing students took

[5] 7.b.i. 2015–2016 and 2016–2017 Core Renewal Pilot Courses, pp. 49–51.

pilot courses in greater relative numbers compared to Management students. The vast majority of enrollments were from the Morrissey College (fall 2015 = 74.9%, spring 2016 = 76.4%). While proportionally fewer varsity athletes took pilot courses, more students with a "low" admission rating (7–10) did so.[6] The Freshman Survey indicates that students who enrolled in Complex Problems and Enduring Questions courses had a higher sense of civic engagement, pluralistic orientation, social agency, and likely college involvement than students who did not take these classes. On the other hand, pilot participants tended to have a *lower* sense of academic self-concept (academic and mathematical ability, intellectual self-confidence, and drive to achieve) and worried *less* about college reputation.[7] *The high-level of female and AHANA participation in the pilots is encouraging. Designed in part to involve first-year students in holistic academic engagement, these classes initially seem to be reaching populations who need them, for instance, those with low admission rating and low academic self-concept. More needs to be learned about the different experiences of professional school students, how their curricular obligations may impede pilot participation, and what distinctive Core classes might be designed to involve them in Core Renewal (for instance, Nursing students may have had a high rate of participation in fall 2015 because one Enduring Questions class was taught by a Nursing faculty member).*

Core Pilots Surveys and Course Evaluations

Associate Dean Bourg and Professor Crane worked with IRPA to create a survey instrument for Core Renewal Pilot Course students in order to generate information unavailable on regular course evaluations.[8] Completed at the end of the semester in addition to course evaluations, the survey was intended to ascertain the extent to which the pilots fulfilled the aspirations of the 2012 Toward a Renewed Core plan and 2014 Vision statement and also to investigate questions raised in the community about intellectual rigor, the appropriateness of interdisciplinary courses for first-year students, etc. According to the summary reports, students "were positive on nearly every measure" and tended to strongly agree that distinctive learning, knowledge acquisition, and reflection took place. They gave highest ratings on the 6-point agreement scale to the following statements:

Fall 2015

[EQ ONLY] I explored enduring questions that are central to understanding human life.	5.74
[EQ ONLY] The questions discussed were of interest to me.	5.69
[CP ONLY] I gained a greater understanding of a complex contemporary problem.	5.48
I gained knowledge that will be useful to me in the future.	5.45
I learned how these two disciplines relate to each other, and differ in their approaches.	5.41

Spring 2016

[EQ ONLY] The questions discussed were of interest to me.	5.60
[EQ ONLY] I explored enduring questions that are central to understanding human life.	5.57
[CP ONLY] I gained a greater understanding of a complex contemporary problem.	5.45
This course was intellectually challenging.	5.41
I would recommend that other first-year students take [an EQ pair of courses] OR [a CP course].	5.35

[6] 7.b.ii. 2015–2016 Core Renewal Pilot Student Demographics, pp. 52–55.

[7] 7.b.iii. Freshman Survey Results for Core Pilot Participants, pp. 56–64.

[8] 7.b.iv. Fall 2015 Core Pilots Survey Summary Report, pp. 65–73, and 7.b.v. Spring 2016 Core Pilots Survey Summary Report, pp. 74–84.

Students furthermore reported that, among other factors, they found themselves challenged to think in new ways, would be able to explain the significance of the problem/question they studied to someone who had not taken the course, and felt that they had gained and improved analytical, reading, and writing skills. They judged that pilot courses required "more effort" compared to other Core courses. On a five-point scale from "much less effort" to "much more effort," students in fall 2015 gave an average rating of 3.96 and those in spring 2016 a rating of 4.11.

Questions with the lowest scores on the 6-point agreement scale were:

Fall 2015

I considered the role of religious faith in approaching [EQs] OR contemporary problems [CPs].	3.78
My main reason for taking these courses was to fulfill core requirements.	3.48
I think I would have benefited more from these courses if I had taken them later in college.	3.02

Spring 2016

I was helped to move toward making a decision about a major in one of these fields.	3.95
My main reason for taking these courses was to fulfill core requirements.	3.95
I was helped to think about a future career path.	3.88
I think I would have benefited more from these courses if I had taken them later in college.	3.25

The pilots show clear success in getting students to approach learning on a problem- or question-based model. Engagement and relevance figure prominently. Similarly, the pilots struck students as intellectually challenging and as opening the door to interdisciplinary connections early in their collegiate experience. The fact that these classes were to be recommended to other first-year students is a good sign. On the other hand, the consideration of the role of religious faith received lower ratings. Especially because several classes had explicitly introduced religious and faith questions into their syllabi, we considered the possibility that the phrasing of this question may have skewed the results (were students being asked about their *religious faith? about the religious faith of the people they studied?). Ratings for the consideration of religious faith did improve in the spring 2016 semester—the first in which a pilot course was taught by a Theology faculty member. Nevertheless, moving forward, we will need to be more deliberate about "the role of religious faith" on at least two levels: first, expanding the number of pilot courses taught by faculty whose scholarly expertise is in theology and religion, and second, continuing to develop expansive programming that takes a broad and inclusive view of Jesuit mission. Likewise, programming can be developed together with the Career Center that invites students as they arrive at BC to consider the relationships between liberal arts education and vocational discernment. The two other lowest rated questions can be understood differently. We want students to be taking the pilots because they are interested in them, not because they are trying to fulfill requirements, and the judgment that these classes would have been more beneficial later in students' time at BC can only be verified in the future.*

In their qualitative comments to the Pilot Course Survey, students noted that Complex Problems and Enduring Questions courses were challenging, interesting, and stimulated their thinking. Overall they highlighted the innovative format of the courses, the dynamic impact of two faculty members collaborating or teaching together, the engaging and relevant nature of the course

topics, the value of course content as well as of the analytical and problem-solving skills acquired, the pilots' transformative effect on future planning, and the meaningful relationships established with faculty members and peers.

More general trends in student comments include the following. Students looked forward to class, found themselves challenged, considered course material outside of class time and beyond requirements, and grasped the value of approaching questions and problems from multiple perspectives. The knowledge gained was "relevant" to a student's "entire life." Faculty members' passion for teaching subjects they care about was evident and appreciated. Students developed closer relationships with their Core pilot teachers and peers than in other classes, which generated a sense of community. Labs in Complex Problems classes and Reflection sessions in all Core pilots reinforced course content and enabled deeper levels of integration. Students described the classes as "eye-opening," were moved by what they studied, and inspired to "make the world a better place." Exposed to unfamiliar topics and knowledge, to materials and performances that might not otherwise have encountered, they discovered new intellectual interests and passions. Perspectives were changed in ways that led students to reimagine their future plans—the very essence of a transformative experience.

Student criticisms of the pilots tended to track those often made of undergraduate courses (too much reading and heavy workload, questions of organization, difficulty of discussion in large classes, etc.). Helpfully, students pointed out that some of the labs had inconsistent projects and workloads, that discussions in large classrooms were difficult, that some reflection sessions repeated experiences during instructional time, and that the courses took up a lot of time. Some of labs were not as organized as they might have been, and some of the Reflection sessions were less valuable to students than had been hoped. Some Enduring Questions pairs could have better coordinated and linked their readings and assignments.

Qualitative comments by students on the pilots are extremely helpful. They articulate in the form of testimonials the ways that the classes seem to be achieving what they are intended to do. Students appear capable of engaging in interdisciplinary dialogue without having "mastered" single disciplines beforehand. They identified areas—labs, Reflection sessions, and Enduring Questions linkages—in need of continuing development. Faculty who have not previously taught freshmen-only classes before probably do need further encouragement to adapt workloads and expectations. We were pleasantly surprised that one somewhat unintended structural factor—for scheduling reasons, several of the Enduring Questions met five days a week—ended up meaningfully facilitating students' experience as a cohort.

On the regular course evaluations, when compared to the average scores of the departments in which the pilot faculty teach, all the 2015–2016 Core Renewal Pilot Courses received higher mean scores in the categories of "intellectually challenging" and "effort required." With one exception, all the pilots also received higher mean scores than department averages on the "course overall."

ii. Faculty

2015–2016 Core Renewal pilot faculty and graduate student teaching assistants (the latter in Complex Problems courses) participated in a series of focus groups and interviews facilitated by

the IRPA.[9] "According to focus group and interview participants," the fall 2015 report concluded, "the issues and course topics were very relevant for first semester freshmen, and these intense courses set the expectations for what college courses will be like and provided groundwork for how to engage with difficult questions. All faculty valued the experience of team teaching, interdisciplinary teaching, and teaching in the Core. Faculty commented that they would love to teach a course like this again."

Those teaching fall 2015 pilots underscored the connection between pilot classes and the BC Mission. They were able to "slow down" and dialogue with their students on their experience of newly arriving at college. Interdisciplinarity brought to the fore the distinctive characteristics of particular disciplines, encouraging contemplation on the virtues and limits of different ways of knowing. By teaching problems and questions that they themselves care about and that are often tied to their research, faculty observed that the pilots departed from the model of formulaic, general introductory classes and tended to resemble the rigor of upper-division electives—although adapted for the needs of entering freshmen. Some teachers seemed to intuitively embrace the Jesuit approach of an experienced guide leading a less-experienced person to engage the world and listen to their deepest desires. Faculty were also surprised by the depth and range of student sharing, sometimes finding themselves unprepared for such intensity. The themes, content, format, and time commitments of the courses prompted such personal disclosures and relationships. Fall 2015 teachers said they would have benefitted from more training and preparation on how to navigate student disclosure: what is appropriate for them to handle and where other units of the university should step in. The small class size of the Enduring Questions and the Complex Problems labs (and PODs) created a strong sense of cohort solidarity among the students, which had positive and negative consequences. On one hand, it gave new students a community of belonging during the turbulent transition to college; on the other hand, it sometimes created "group think" that made students reticent to criticize one another's positions, thereby undermining academic possibility. Faculty were pleased with student performance and engagement, which they judged at a higher caliber than other first-year courses some had taught. As one teacher stated, "By week three or four, you wouldn't know they were first semester, first years." Students were said to have successfully navigated the challenges of engaging two different disciplines.

Fall 2015 faculty all observed the particularly high workload in these courses. The classes themselves have many moving parts, and team-teaching takes particular time and energy. One person described the pilot semester as the least productive ever in terms of research. Enduring Questions teachers said it would be useful if they visited one another's classes more regularly. The Complex Problems teachers recommended that the two-course equivalency credit be continued. Faculty also made useful suggestions regarding the spring pedagogical seminar, labs, reflection, team-teaching, post-pilot follow-ups with students, and logistics.

Spring 2016 Enduring Questions faculty similarly emphasized the bonding and esprit de corps that developed among students in small classes. Exceptional student engagement was a by-

[9] Because individual faculty members and courses can be identified in its contents, the IRPA report on faculty focus groups is not included in this public version of the State of the Core Report.

product of this dynamic. Faculty also emphasized the distinctiveness of first-year students. As the report noted, "freshman are more 'open to surprise and don't know what college is or should be,' which allows for a more 'expansive' experience." One colleague was able to compare the pilot course with another Core class he/she was teaching at the same time. Students in the pilot class seemed more thoughtful and reflective, in part due to the absence of upper-class students. At the same time, teaching freshmen poses its own challenges; first-year students are learning how to learn in a college setting, and certain skills, background, and experience cannot be assumed. Enduring Questions faculty wondered how well students were making connections between the two classes, and open-ended assignments raised some concerns, but overall most "felt that the students were strong, eager and engaged."

There was significant variation in how Reflection sessions were viewed: some instructors treated them as extra class time, others pursued "outside the class" activities beyond the scheduled Reflection time block, several had students keep journals, etc. Faculty's critical reflection on the Reflection sessions—what the term "reflection" means, what those sessions are intended to do, how that time can be structured, and so forth—will be crucial for ongoing programmatic development. Similarly, questions raised about the substance and value of interdisciplinarity should continue to inform future planning. The issue of departmental support or resistance to Core Renewal emerged. Junior faculty had particular concerns about how participation in the pilots might affect their standing in departments and the process of tenure and promotion, and they also seemed more open than senior colleagues to applying the experience and lessons of the Core Renewal pilot experience to other classes they teach. As in the previous semester, spring 2016 teachers also made useful suggestions regarding the spring pedagogical seminar, space, registration, TAs, advising, the involvement of non-academic staff, and the costs and benefits of expanding the program beyond its initial small-scale, "elite" composition.

Core pilot courses by and large seem to be accomplishing what they are intended to do: advancing engagement with the Core. They provide a unique interdisciplinary experience for entering first-year students, stimulating them intellectually while providing opportunities for integrating academic learning with life outside the classroom. Concerns as to whether freshmen would be capable of engaging in interdisciplinary dialogue were generally assuaged by the high level of student preparedness and performance. The Reflection dimension is still in development. There is a need for greater clarity over the meaning of "reflection" and what Reflection sessions should be doing. A principle virtue of the Enduring Questions classes is their small size, and moving forward it remains to be seen how many 19-person courses can realistically be regularly offered. Faculty and graduate student teaching assistants commented that these courses were more work than others they had taught, but also that they were more rewarding. The Complex Problems classes in particular are labor intensive, and faculty concerns about time commitments need to be taken seriously.

<u>Challenges, Changes, and Prospects</u>

After the first of three years piloting Complex Problems and Enduring Questions courses we have learned a number of lessons that have already led to changes, and we can begin to lay out prospects for future program development. It will take time to institute sustainable, ongoing renewal, involving both particular kinds of classes and more general revitalization and coordination. One of the challenges of Core Renewal Pilot Courses has been to bring faculty

together in a university culture that is department-oriented. Matching faculty together is not self-evident, and considerable energy has been required to solicit proposals and find viable partnerships. Professor Crane's notable efforts in this regard need to be singled out for specific praise. A developmentalist approach whereby most proposals are cultivated and encouraged has been helpful: supporting innovative and experimental new ways of connecting the Core to students and to mission. One of the unintended benefits of Core Renewal has been to stimulate dialogue and experimentation around the Core and teaching across campus, confirming that in some quarters there is pent up energy among the faculty eager for expression. It remains to be seen over time how expansion of the program intersects with faculty and student interest and availability. It should be noted that securing enough graduate student Teaching Assistants was a *particular* challenge that will continue to hamper the pilots. The way that departments handle supplementary labor differently makes a unified, multi-departmental program difficult to implement.

Several actions and changes have been made based on evaluations of the first year of Core Renewal Pilot Courses:

- In order to further understanding of and possibilities for project-based learning, in June 2016 a team of pilot faculty, Center for Teaching Excellence staff, and the Assistant Director of the Core attended a three-day nationally recognized workshop on that theme at Worcester Polytechnic Institute.
- Because we found that AY16 faculty were sometimes limited in what they wanted to do with their students by the restrictions of the typical classroom, a flexible room for project-based lab sessions is being created in Carney Hall that will be available for the fall 2016 semester. This room will have moveable furniture, cushioned carpeting, and sufficient whiteboard space to enable faculty and students to engage in creative and innovative activities.
- The spring 2016 pedagogical workshops for AY17 faculty were redesigned in light of frank feedback from AY16 faculty. Emphasis was placed on concrete and practical training, and more space was given for faculty partners to work together. Enduring Questions faculty were encouraged to develop/revise their syllabi in order to strengthen links between their courses. The POD experience was presented as a model, and one spring 2017 Complex Problems class plans to work with Mission and Ministry to use it. Faculty were required to complete their syllabi in May 2016 prior to receiving stipends, since we learned that, for classes with several moving parts, it is all the more necessary to begin early.
- As we move toward matching faculty pairs for AY18, we are compiling descriptions of successful lab assignments and reflection sessions in order to provide colleagues with concrete examples in order to generate further ideas.
- In step with the general implementation of E-1-A forms, in 2016–2017, a sample of pilot courses will link stated learning outcomes with the direct assessment of student work.
- In coming years we will follow the Core pilot student cohorts to assess how these classes have helped shape their education.

5. Office of the Associate Dean for the Core and University Core Renewal Committee
In July 2015 the University Core Development Committee, in existence since 1991, was replaced by the University Core Renewal Committee, chaired by the Associate Dean for the Core, a new position also created at that time. In March 2016 an Assistant Director of the Core, Dr. Charles Keenan, was hired. Administrative organization of the Core in AY16 essentially moved from zero to one. The Office of the Associate for the Core:

- Organized logistics, assessment, and reimbursements for AY16 Core Renewal pilot courses; facilitated applications, scheduled courses, and designed spring 2016 pedagogical workshops for AY17 Core Renewal pilot courses in collaboration with the Center for Teaching Excellence. Hosted Core Town Halls to inform the community of progress in Core Renewal. Organized lunches and events to solicit faculty participation in the pilots. Worked with the Office of Marketing Communications to develop promotional materials for the Core pilots (videos, direct mailing, registration handouts) as well as a brochure on the Core in general. Led August 2015 Teaching Assistant training for graduate students teaching AY16 Complex Problems classes. Planned for the same in August 2016.
- Worked with Institutional Research, Planning, and Assessment to assess the Core overall and the Core pilots in particular. Added Core-specific questions to certain Student Services student evaluations.
- Facilitated the rewriting of Core requirement descriptions by departments and clusters of departments that contribute to the Core, updating the 1991 language in light of the 2014 Core Vision statement and changed realities of the twenty-first century. Managed the process whereby departments submitted E-1-A assessment forms.
- Facilitated conversations with faculty and students on the Cultural Diversity Core requirement (widely viewed as among the least coherent requirements) toward its possible reshaping.
- Put in place new policies and procedures that regularized deadlines for students seeking Core substitution credits and for faculty seeking approval of new classes for non-pilot Core credit. Reviewed student applications for Cultural Diversity substitution credit (121 requests were made in AY16). Served as a first point of contact for inquiries about the Core.
- Overhauled the Core website. www.bc.edu/core.
- Created an inventory of Core courses—the first in many years. Master lists were reviewed with departments and Student Services to resolve inconsistencies.
- Developed Core Pedagogical Innovation (CPI) grants to stimulate experimentation, further integration with mission, and deepen student engagement in non-pilot Core courses.
- Presented on the Core at the new faculty orientation, Admitted Eagle Days, Excellence in Teaching Day and Center for Teaching Excellence events, Student Services administrative workshop, etc.

The University Core Renewal Committee met eight times during the academic year.[11] The UCRC possesses three subcommittees. The Core Renewal Subcommittee oversaw initial review

[11] 7.c. University Core Renewal Committee Minutes, pp. 85–102.

of AY17 pilot course applications, assessment of AY16 pilot courses, and development of AY17 pilot course. The Curriculum Subcommittee met four times to review applications by faculty seeking Core credit (non-pilot courses); thirty-five courses were submitted for new non-pilot Core credit in AY16 (previously, reviewing such course applications was the sole task of the University Core Development Committee). The Assessment Subcommittee reviewed draft Core requirement description rewrites and monitored progress of E-1-A forms for NEASC assessment. All subcommittee work was presented to the UCRC as a whole for discussion and decision.

6. Analysis and Considerations

As it has developed since 1991, the Core is relatively stable but also in some respects static. It has functioned over time. Students graduate having met its requirements, and departments staff the necessary courses. Although Core classes form a crucial part of some departments' identities and course offerings, there is a widespread sense that the Core has not been the most dynamic aspect of a Boston College liberal arts education: students often seek to "get it out of the way" en route to their major(s), and some faculty feel more passionate about teaching that relates to specific expertise than to survey-style general education. Disengagement is a specter haunting the Core. A second point is that the Core embodies variety, which can be experienced both as flexibility and as inconsistency. Students can fulfill many requirements through Advanced Placement or study abroad and, with a few exceptions, can take Core classes at any time during their four years at BC. Students seem to have very different experiences of the Core. One anecdote has it that a particular student managed to take only Philosophy and Theology Core at BC while fulfilling all other eleven requirements through AP and away from campus. Thirdly, the Core is thus somewhat chaotic. Until this year, no consistent listing of all classes approved for Core credit had existed. Oversight had been previously limited to the approval of new Core classes, which retain approved status permanently. Departments have long taught the Core with very little university-wide dialogue about the value and meaning of liberal arts general education in a Jesuit, Catholic institution. The Core having drifted for many years, there are clear challenges in bringing programmatic coordination and integration to the signature liberal arts curriculum of Boston College.

The process of Core Renewal has been designed to address this state of affairs. The Core Curriculum is now in transition, and ongoing renewal holds great promise for answering the needs of students in the twenty-first century and revitalizing academic connections to the Jesuit, Catholic identity of Boston College. Core Renewal presents a singular opportunity to engage faculty in the mission and community of Boston College. Engagement will require meeting faculty "where they are" and valuing what is important to them. Results of renewal since 2012 include: the 2014 Vision Statement, the new Office of the Associate Dean for the Core and University Core Renewal Committee, and the 2015–2018 pilot courses. Initial evaluations of the pilot courses are very promising, and new administrative structures hold similar potential. Renewal is and should be a gradual process. The approach to the Core pilots thus far seems wise: starting slowly, trying new things, building gradually, and learning along the way. Since the Core has developed organically over time, there is probably some risk in bringing too much change too quickly. The Core needs to be approached holistically: from prospective students and their parents all the way through alumni and development. We can do a better job explaining and promoting the Core to prospective and current students, parents, the BC community, and the public.

Among the principal challenges is to develop collaborative relationships among faculty in a university culture based largely on departmental identity and life. Although 17 different MCA&S departments contributed/will contribute to the Core in AY15–AY17, participation had been most high in English, Sociology, and History. Mathematics, Physics, and Psychology, for instance, have not participated (nor have Communications and Computer Science, although they do not normally teach in the Core). The insistence by the Philosophy and Theology departments that their Core courses follow a one-year continuation sequence may pose certain logistical challenges for Enduring Questions and Complex Problems classes as they move forward. It will be important to include the natural sciences in interdisciplinary Core classes; many natural science Core classes tend to serve as introductions to the major, and there may be ways to better serve the needs of non-majors for general scientific literacy. The pro's and con's of junior faculty, Professors of the Practice, and part-time instructors teaching Core Renewal classes should be explicitly addressed. Other questions that have been raised include: Will Core renewal expand to involve students in their 2nd, 3rd, and 4th years? Should faculty who teach pilot courses normally be expected to teach the class more than once? Should students be required to take a certain number of Core courses (e.g., nine of fifteen) at Boston College, and if so, how would Admissions and Student Services facilitate this rule?

Some experiments during 2015–2016 were less successful; for instance, Core Pedagogical Innovation Grants fell flat through insufficient faculty interest (and probably poor promotion). Other issues were not addressed in 2015–2016 due to time, energy, and staffing constraints; for example, review of Office of International Programs courses pre-approved for Core credit. Indeed, the relationship of the Core, almost entirely housed in MCA&S, to other parts of the university needs to better understood and deliberately engaged. One thinks of the professional schools, Advanced Placement, First-Year Experience and Orientation, the Honors program, non-academic staff in Student Affairs and Mission and Ministry, and so forth.

Looking forward, possible considerations include:

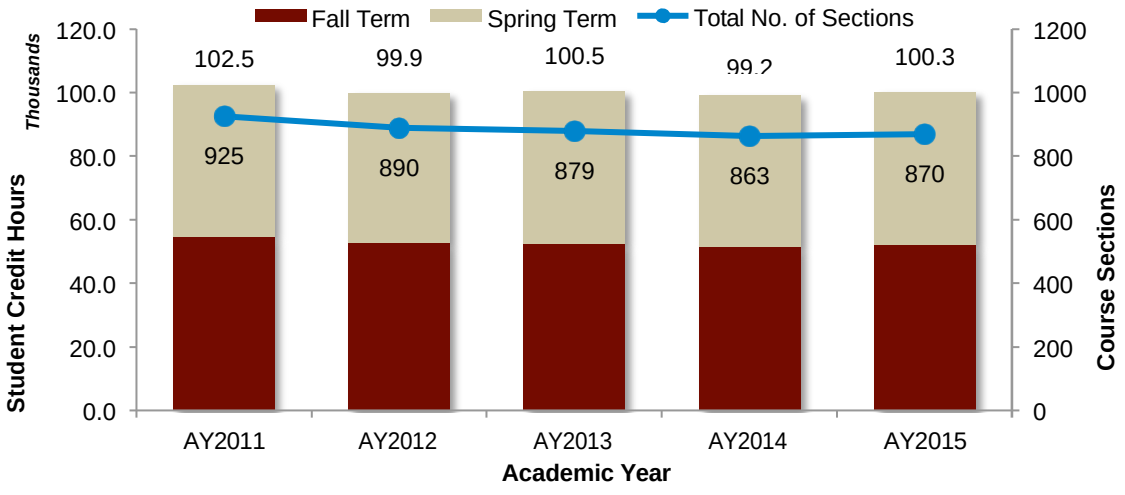
- Both a postdoctoral program and teaching assistant graduate fellowships managed by the Office of the Associate Dean for the Core that would ensure adequate staffing for Enduring Questions and Complex Problems classes.
- A May or June 2017 retreat for faculty participating in the pilots that would (1) enable reflection on their experience and on undergraduate liberal arts education in a Jesuit, Catholic context, and (2) reward faculty by offering them several days of quiet writing (along the lines of the Mission and Ministry Villa retreat).
- A year from now in June 2017 a plan for a sustainable, post-pilot program should be articulated in the annual State of the Core Report. In particular, target enrollments, staffing needs, and the intersection between Enduring Questions and Complex Problems courses and other key elements of the Core (Pulse, Perspectives, the natural sciences) should be made clear.
- To the Boston College community: What do we want to know about the pilot courses in 2016–2017 and 2017–2018?

OVERVIEW

Boston College's Core Curriculum is designed to further "the development of the intellectual, reflective, ethical, and creative habits of mind that will enable students to become lifelong learners, to seek meaning in their lives, and to work toward constructing a more just and human world."[1] The Core Curriculum is a fifteen-course program spanning various disciplines, including Arts, History, Literature, Mathematics, Natural Science, Philosophy, Theology and Writing.[2]

Between AY2011 and AY2015, Boston College faculty offered nearly 900 Core courses[3] with more than 4,400 course sections, generating more than 500,000 student credit hours. The number of course sections offered has decreased slightly over the last five years (see Chart 1, below), from 925 in AY2011 to 870 in AY2015 (a 6% drop). The number of student credit hours (SCH) taught during the same period also decreased, but by a smaller percentage (-2%), suggesting that the average class size may be growing slightly. In fact, the average size of a Core class has increased by 4%, from 35.9 students in AY2011 to 37.2 students in AY15, although median class size has remained constant at 26 students). A full list of Core Courses and sections, by year, is included as Appendix A.

Chart 1: Total Core Course Sections and Student Credit AY2011 - AY2015



[1] BC Core Curriculum website: http://www.bc.edu/sites/core/philosophy.html

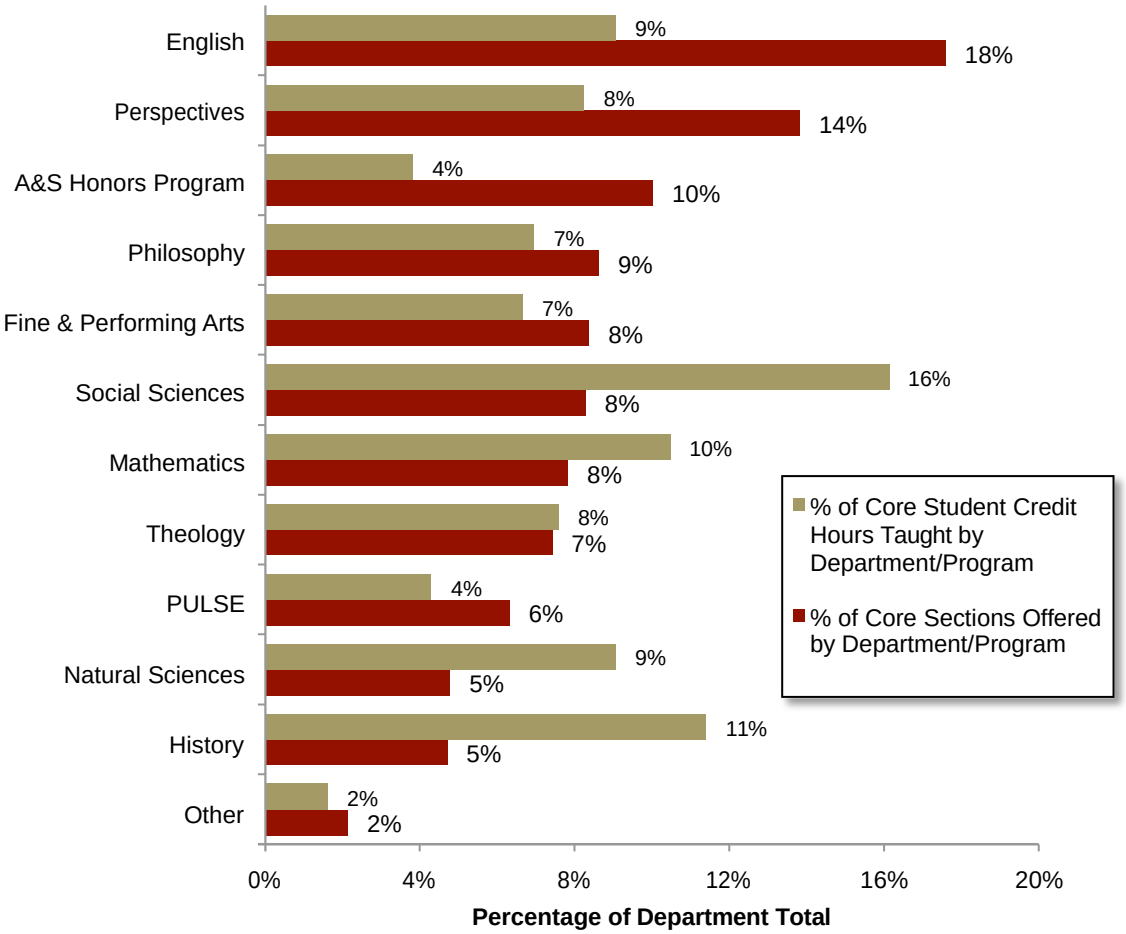
[2] The Core Curriculum also requires undergraduates to take one course in Cultural Diversity; because the Cultural Diversity requirement differs from the other requirements in that it may be fulfilled by a course above the Core level or may simultaneously fulfill another Core or major requirement, Cultural Diversity courses are not included in this analysis.

[3] For the purpose of this report, "Core courses" include all courses of three or more credits marked as a Core course in the Data Warehouse (Instruction Level "L"); 0-credit discussion groups and 1-credit labs were not included in this analysis.

OVERVIEW: DEPARTMENTS TEACHING CORE COURSES

Courses satisfying the Core Curriculum can be found in at least 28 different academic departments, with individual department's course sections ranging in number from one to more than 150 each year. There is some variation between the distribution of Core sections across departments and the distribution of Core-generated student credit hours. For example, English offered about 18% of all Core course sections over the last five years, but those course sections produced only 9% of all Core-generated student credit hours. On the other hand, History offered 5% of all Core course sections over the last five years, but those course sections produced about 11% of all Core-generated student credit hours. This difference in the number of sections and the number of student credit hours is due to the variation in class size among the disciplines: in the last five year Core sections in English enrolled an average of 19 students while Core sections in History enrolled an average of 91 students (note that 0-credit discussion sections are not included).

Chart 2: Core Course Sections and Student Credit Hours by Department AY2011 - AY2015

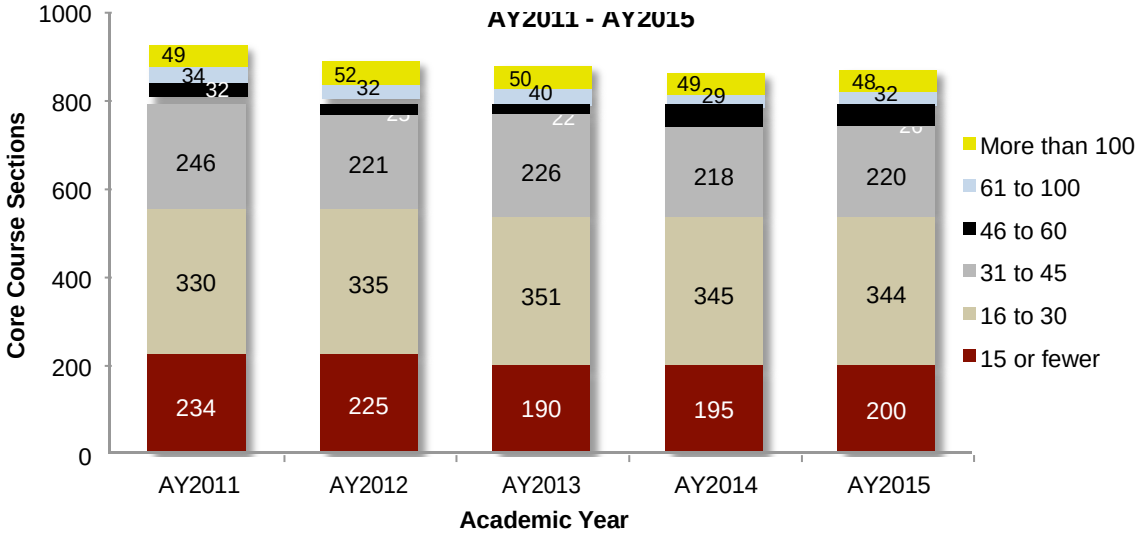


See Appendix B for a list of Core course sections and total student credit hours by department and academic year.

OVERVIEW: COURSE SECTION SIZE

Overall, the distribution of Core course sections has remained quite stable over the last five years. In AY2011 about 25% of all Core course sections enrolled 15 or fewer students and in AY2015 that percentage was 24%. Over the last five years, on average, another 39% of Core course sections enrolled between 16 and 30 students. Classes of 31 to 45 students made up another 26% of Core sections, and 7% of the sections enrolled somewhere between 46 and 100 students. Sections enrolling more than 100 students represented only about six percent (6%) of all Core sections.

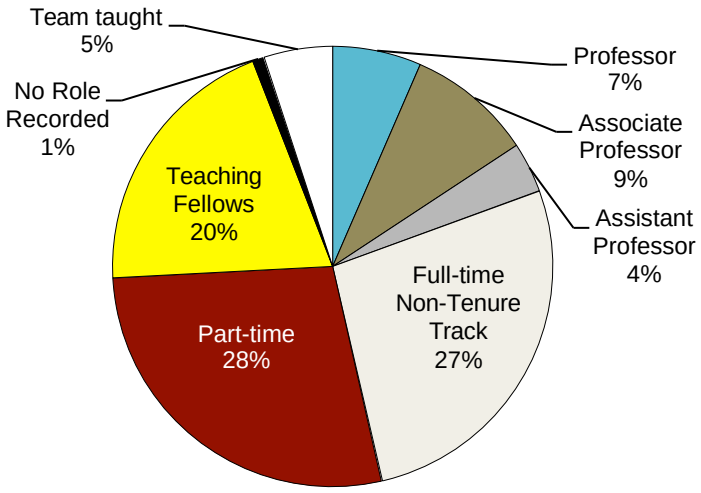
Chart 3: Distribution of Core Course Sections by Class Size
AY2011 - AY2015



OVERVIEW: FACULTY TEACHING CORE COURSES

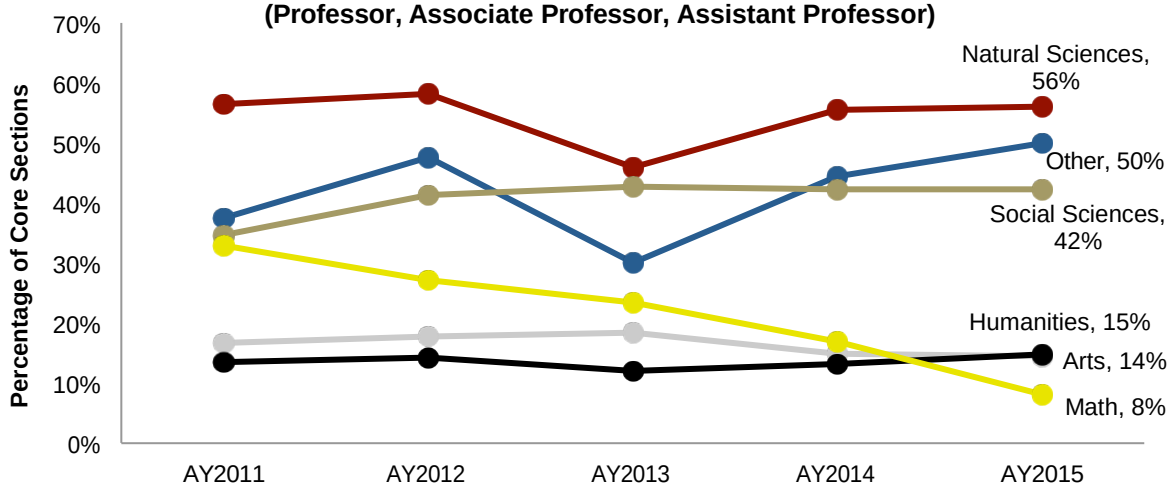
Faculty from all ranks teach Core courses, but supplemental faculty (Teaching Fellows and Part-time Faculty) and Full-time Non-tenure Track faculty collectively teach the majority of Core course sections at Boston College. As a group, Part-time faculty teach the most Core course sections (teaching 28% of all Core sections), followed closely by Full-time Non-Tenure Track faculty (at 27%). Teaching Fellows teach another 20% of all Core course sections (this figure excludes 0-

Chart 4: Core Course Sections by Instructor Rank



credit discussion sections). Over the past five years, ranked faculty (Professors, Associate Professors, and Assistant Professors) taught about 20% of all the Core course sections offered. However, the courses taught by ranked faculty tend to be larger than those taught by other instructors: 32% of all Core student credit hours were taught by ranked faculty. The percentage of Core sections taught by ranked faculty differs among disciplines, but with the exception of Mathematics that percentage has remained fairly consistent over the past five years.

Chart 5: Percentage of Core Course Sections Taught by Ranked Faculty (Professor, Associate Professor, Assistant Professor)



See Appendix C for a list of Core course sections and total student credit hours by faculty rank and academic year.

STUDENT EXPERIENCE WITH THE CORE CURRICULUM

Boston College's student information system (UIS) does not currently permit a broad examination of the ways in which students fulfill their Core Curriculum requirements. However, to understand the ways in which students experience the Core, the course histories of all graduating seniors in the Class of 2015 were reviewed. Core requirements were approximated by reviewing the course number and semester for each course a student enrolled in at Boston College, including advanced standing credit. Using this "first-in" method to determine, for instance, how a student satisfied the Literature requirement meant that the first qualifying course in which the student was enrolled was deemed to be the Literature requirement course for that student. While not an exact record of the courses students applied to their Core requirements as documented in UIS, this "first-in" method does give some insight into students' course-taking patterns.

The Class of 2015 had an initial cohort of 2,287 freshmen. From that cohort, 1,988 had graduated by May 2015. Unless noted otherwise, the data described below refer to these 1,988 graduates.

STUDENT EXPERIENCE: AP CREDITS

Many students took one or more Advanced Placement (AP) Exams prior to entering Boston College. In general, a student scoring four or five on the exams will be awarded advanced placement (a score of three may qualify for advanced placement in Languages). While students do not earn actual credit for advanced standing, qualifying AP scores can be used to fulfill corresponding requirements in the Core Curriculum.

Students in the Class of 2015 collectively submitted more than 3,800 qualifying AP scores that could be used to satisfy Core requirements. The AP Calculus exams, which could be used to satisfy the Mathematics Core requirement, had the greatest number of qualifying scores (859). Qualifying scores from AP exams in Economics, Psychology, and Government and Politics (a total of 793) could be used to satisfy one or more of the Social Science requirements. More than 780 qualifying scores from AP Exams in Biology, Chemistry, Physics and Environmental Science could be used to satisfy one or more of the Natural Science requirements. For the Core requirement in Writing, 516 students submitted qualifying scores from the AP English Language exam, and 496 qualifying scores from the AP English Literature exam would satisfy the Core Literature requirement. Additional submitted AP exam scores would satisfy the Arts and History Core requirements.

Table 1: Class of 2015 Core Requirements and Qualifying AP Exam Scores

Core Area	Number of Qualifying Exams Submitted at Time of Admission*
Arts	54
History	311
Literature	496
Math	859
Natural Science	782
Social Science	793
Writing	516
	3,811

*Includes all students in entering cohort

It should be noted that submitting a qualifying AP Exam score does not automatically satisfy the related Core requirement. Many students submit AP scores to assist in appropriate placement during the course selection process, particularly in Mathematics and Natural Sciences. The student subsequently takes courses that would satisfy a particular Core and don't "use" their AP credit for that purpose.

STUDENT EXPERIENCE: TIMING OF CORE COURSES

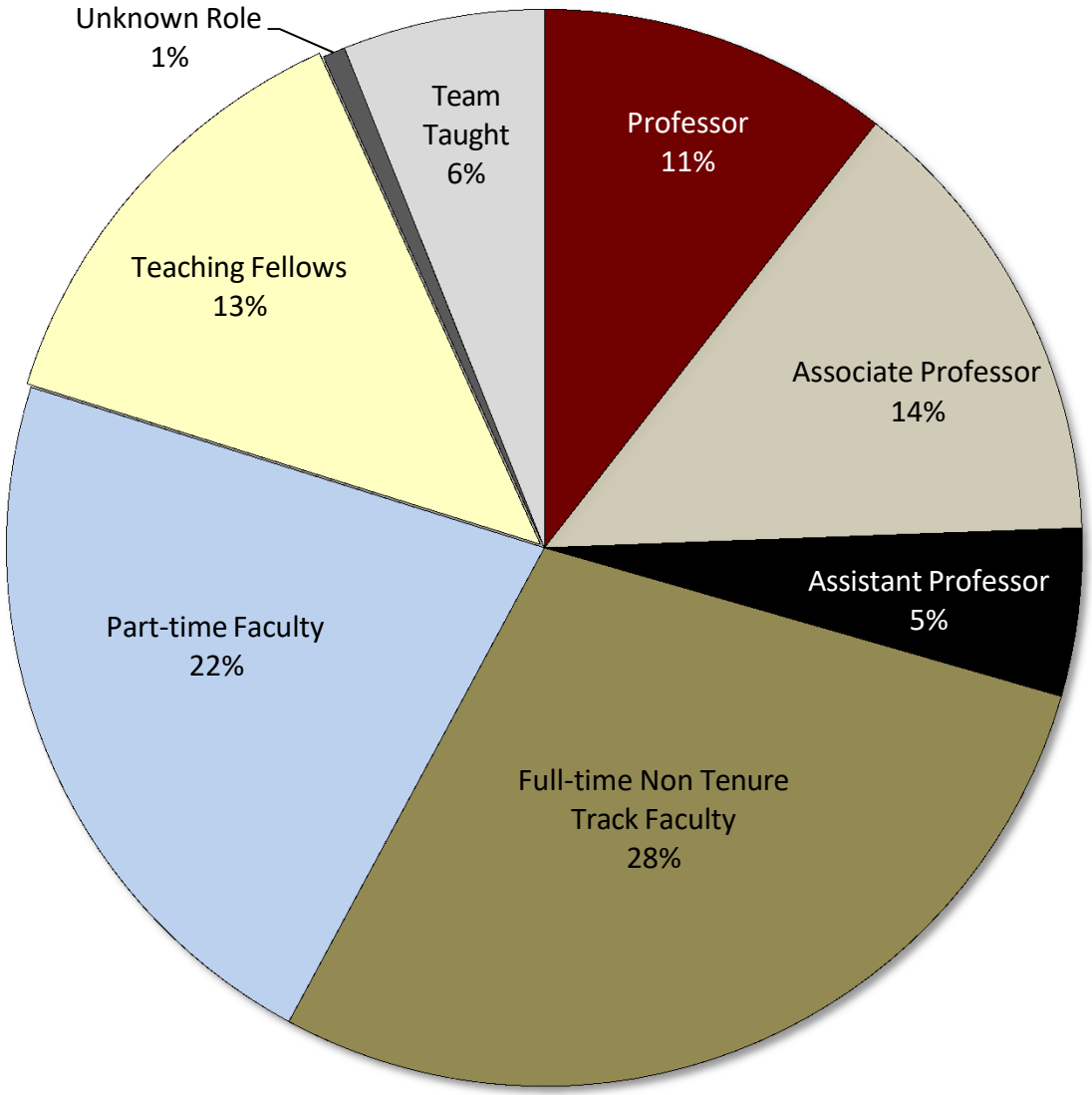
Students in the Class of 2015 took Core courses throughout their time at Boston College. Students' timing of their Core courses varied significantly across subject areas (see Table 2). For instance, 97% of the class completed their Writing requirement by the end of Freshman Year (34% through Advanced Placement and 63% during Freshman year). In contrast, only 25% of the class completed their Arts requirement before Sophomore year. Next to Writing, the Mathematics and Literature requirements were most often completed before or during the Freshman year (the Math core requirement was completed by 88%; 88% also finished the Literature requirement).

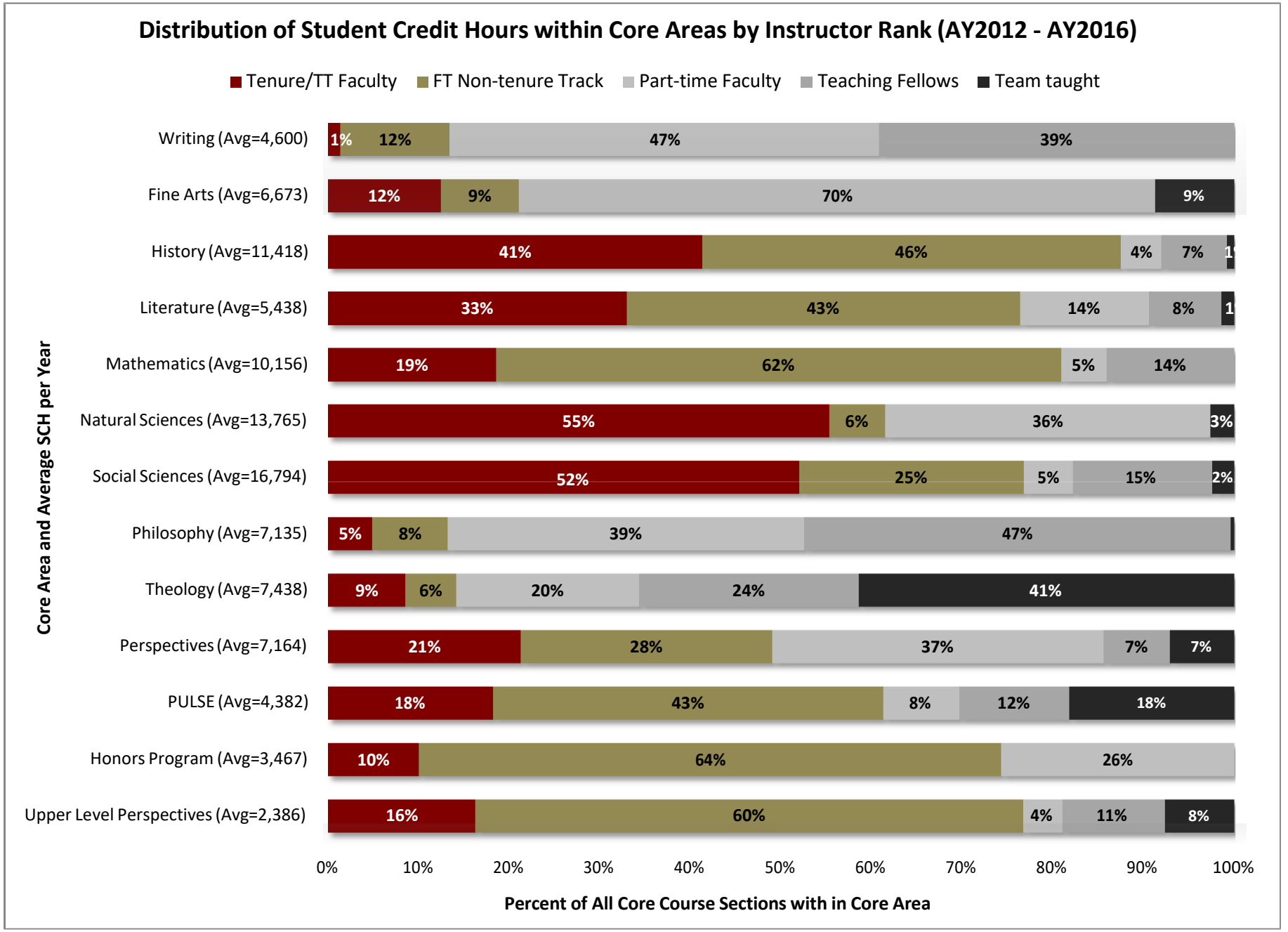
It appears that the majority of students take most of their Core courses during their first two years (or through AP): 87% of the Class of 2015 completed 10 or more Core requirements before the start of Junior Year, and more than half (54%) completed 12 or more in that time. On average, graduates of the Class of 2015 completed 11.5 Core requirements in their first two years.

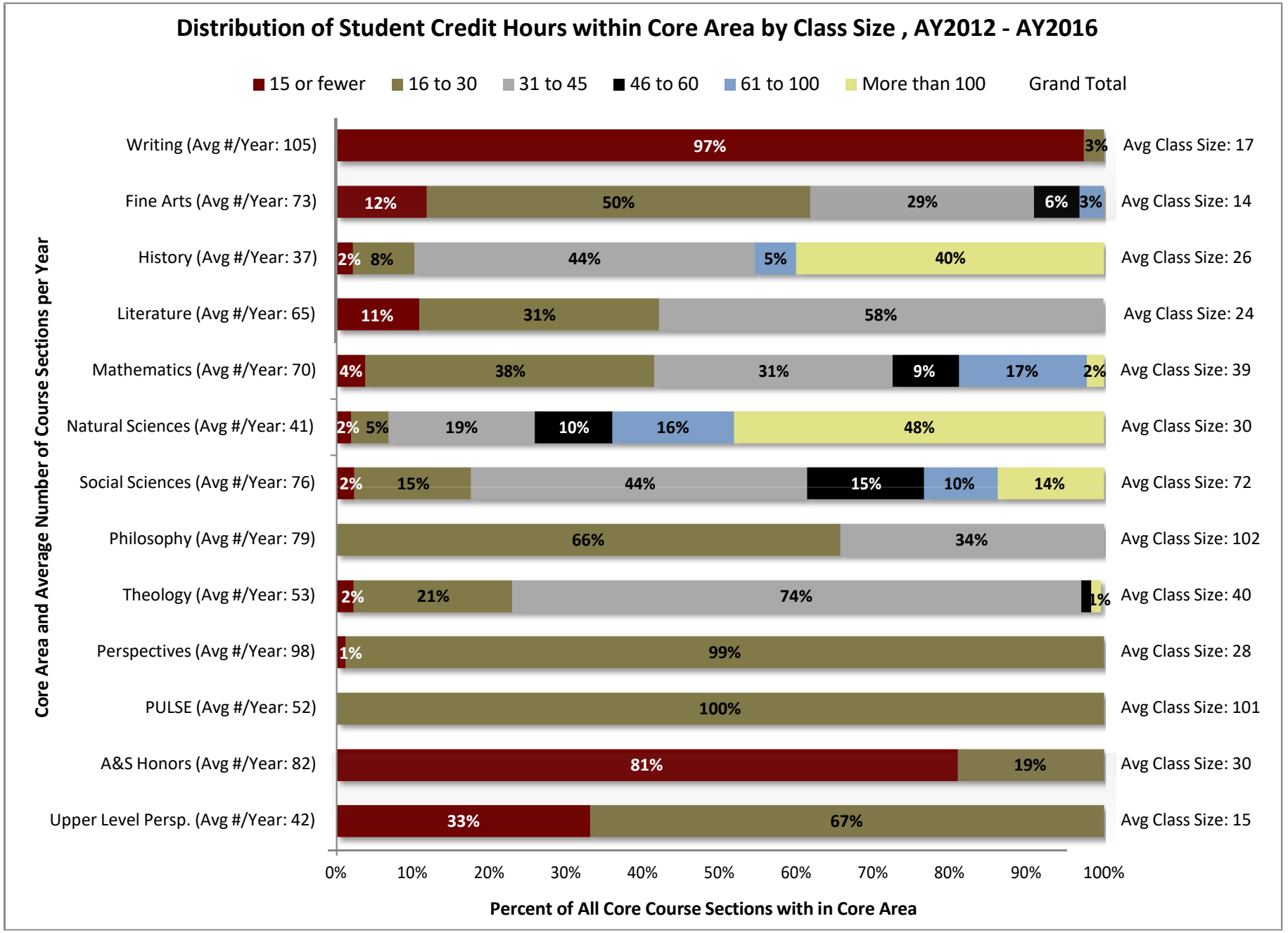
Table 2: Percentage of Students Completing Core Requirement, by Student Classification

Core Area	Advanced Placement	Freshman Year	Sophomore Year	Junior Year	Senior Year	Other*	Total
Arts	3%	22%	22%	30%	16%	8%	100%
History1	18%	25%	37%	12%	6%	2%	100%
History2	18%	27%	32%	13%	7%	3%	100%
Literature	32%	55%	6%	1%	2%	3%	100%
Math	29%	58%	7%	2%	1%	2%	100%
Natural Science 1	29%	40%	22%	5%	2%	2%	100%
Natural Science 2	14%	25%	24%	13%	11%	13%	100%
Philosophy 1	0%	46%	38%	9%	6%	1%	100%
Philosophy 2	0%	43%	36%	9%	7%	3%	100%
Social Sciences 1	28%	56%	13%	2%	1%	1%	100%
Social Sciences 2	8%	51%	28%	5%	4%	4%	100%
Theology 1	0%	42%	37%	11%	10%	0%	100%
Theology 2	0%	41%	35%	11%	12%	2%	100%
Writing	34%	63%	1%	0%	0%	2%	100%

Student Credit Hours in Core Courses, by Faculty Rank
(AY2012 - AY2016)




Distribution of Student Credit Hours within Core Areas by Instructor Rank (AY2012 - AY2016)
Tenure/TT Faculty
FT Non-tenure Track
Part-time Faculty
Teaching Fellows
Team taught
Core Area and Average SCH per Year
Writing (Avg=4,600)
1%
12%
47%
39%
Fine Arts (Avg=6,673)
12%
9%
70%
9%
History (Avg=11,418)
41%
46%
4%
7%
Literature (Avg=5,438)
33%
43%
14%
8%
1
Mathematics (Avg=10,156)
19%
62%
5%
14%
Natural Sciences (Avg=13,765)
55%
6%
36%
3%
Social Sciences (Avg=16,794)
52%
25%
5%
15%
2%
Philosophy (Avg=7,135)
5%
8%
39%
47%
Theology (Avg=7,438)
9%
6%
20%
24%
41%
Perspectives (Avg=7,164)
21%
28%
37%
7%
7%
PULSE (Avg=4,382)
18%
43%
8%
12%
18%
Honors Program (Avg=3,467)
10%
64%
26%
Upper Level Perspectives (Avg=2,386)
16%
60%
4%
11%
8%
0%
10%
20%
30%
40%
50%
60%
70%
80%
90%
100%
Percent of All Core Course Sections with in Core Area


Distribution of Student Credit Hours within Core Area by Class Size , AY2012 - AY2016
15 or fewer
16 to 30
31 to 45
46 to 60
61 to 100
More than 100
Grand Total
Core Area and Average Number of Course Sections per Year
Writing (Avg #/Year: 105)
97%
3%
Avg Class Size: 17
Fine Arts (Avg #/Year: 73)
12%
50%
29%
6%
3%
Avg Class Size: 14
History (Avg #/Year: 37)
2%
8%
44%
5%
40%
Avg Class Size: 26
Literature (Avg #/Year: 65)
11%
31%
58%
Avg Class Size: 24
Mathematics (Avg #/Year: 70)
4%
38%
31%
9%
17%
2%
Avg Class Size: 39
Natural Sciences (Avg #/Year: 41)
2%
5%
19%
10%
16%
48%
Avg Class Size: 30
Social Sciences (Avg #/Year: 76)
2%
15%
44%
15%
10%
14%
Avg Class Size: 72
Philosophy (Avg #/Year: 79)
66%
34%
Avg Class Size: 102
Theology (Avg #/Year: 53)
2%
21%
74%
1%
Avg Class Size: 40
Perspectives (Avg #/Year: 98)
1%
99%
Avg Class Size: 28
PULSE (Avg #/Year: 52)
100%
Avg Class Size: 101
A&S Honors (Avg #/Year: 82)
81%
19%
Avg Class Size: 30
Upper Level Persp. (Avg #/Year: 42)
33%
67%
Avg Class Size: 15
0%
10%
20%
30%
40%
50%
60%
70%
80%
90%
100%
Percent of All Core Course Sections with in Core Area

BOSTON COLLEGE UNDERGRADUATE EXPERIENCE QUESTIONNAIRE: SUMMARY REPORT FOR THE CLASS of 2013

Study Overview

In response to NEASC's assessment requirements for accreditation, the purpose of the Boston College Undergraduate Experience Questionnaire was to support our institution's need for accountability data by providing information on a broad range of student outcomes sourced from Boston College's mission statement and other foundational documents such as BC's *Journey to Adulthood* publication. Administered online during the late fall of 2012 to all members of the Class of 2013, the survey generated responses from over 700 seniors, a 31% response rate. Representation across enrolled College and race/ethnicity were reflective of BC's overall population of seniors; females in the survey sample were slightly over-represented (59% in the sample versus 51% in the general Class of 2013 population). This report offers a summary of select findings drawn from the survey's 16 target areas: goals (and sub-goals) for students in the intellectual domain and personal/religious domain.

Survey Highlights

- In general, students demonstrated strong agreement with the goals and sub-goals in both domains.
- CSON students tended to rate goals and sub-goals more favorably (i.e., were in greater agreement that they had achieved or experienced the goal/sub-goal) than students enrolled in the other Colleges.
- Female students tended to rate goals and sub-goals more favorably than their male counterparts although males were more likely to agree with sub-goals related to hands-on work and projects (e.g., sub-goals 7d (collaborated in a research project), 7e (designed an independent study), 8c (participated in research fellowship program), 8d (presented project results), and 8e (pursued a senior thesis).

Intellectual Goals

- Half of the instrument's 16 target areas are focused on intellectual goals; when these goals' sub-goal scores are rank ordered, the majority of those in the top third are from Goal 6: *As an undergraduate at Boston College, I acquired the intellectual skills (critical, quantitative, and expressive) and habits that are the essential tools of the educated person and will allow me to continue my lifelong search for truth.*
- Students tended to more strongly agree with sub-goals that reflected growth or development in their skills and abilities -- e.g., many of Goal 6's sub-goals, such as improved competence in: *thinking critically and analytically, speaking clearly and effectively,* and *analyzing quantitative problems*; similarly with sub-goal 2a. *acquired comprehensive understanding of major and its relationship to other disciplines* and 1b. *found classes stimulated me to examine previous assumptions and ideas.*
- Students tended to agree less with sub-goals that involved making connections between their intellectual and spiritual life (e.g., sub-goals from Goal 5). In fact, Goal 5: *As an undergraduate at Boston College I recognized the roles of both faith and reason as integral components of a liberal arts education*, yielded the lowest average score (3.56 on 1-5 scale) compared to the other 15 goals.

Personal & Religious Goals

- The balance of the instrument's items are focused on personal and religious/spiritual goals; Goal 13, *As an undergraduate at Boston College, I matured emotionally and socially*, yielded the highest average score of 4.60 compared to all other goals across both areas.

- Students tended to agree more strongly with goals that promoted their growth and development with who they are as a person (e.g., Goal 9, *took more responsibility for my actions*) and their role as a community member (e.g., Goal 15, *men and women for others*).

- Students tended to agree less with sub-goals that involved participating in religious/spiritual organizations or social causes (e.g., sub-goals 12a, 14a, 15a, 16a), or engaging in personal conversations or interactions with faculty/staff (e.g., sub-goals 11b, 11d, 11c, 14d, 14c).

Table 1: Rank ordering of Goals

I = Intellectual; 3 out of the bottom 3 ranked goals are in I-type category
P & R = Personal & Religious; 2 out of the top 3 ranked goals are in P&R-type category

Rank	Goal	Type	Item *Scale = 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree)*	Score
1	Goal 13	P & R	Matured emotionally and socially	4.60
2	Goal 12	P & R	Developed an openness, understanding, and appreciation for persons whose experiences and life experiences were different from my own	4.37
3	Goal 1	I	Had a rigorous undergraduate intellect ual experience	4.33
4	Goal 7	I	Explored personal intellectual interests in opportunities beyond my major and Core curriculum experience	4.27
5	Goal 9	P & R	Took more responsibility for my actions and better integrated what I know and believe with how I act	4.26
6	Goal 6	I	Acquired the intellectual skills […] and habits that are the essential tools of the educated person and will allow me to continue my lifelong search for truth	4.24
7	Goal 15	P & R	Discovered Boston College's commitment to educate men and women for others, and its implications for my life	4.23
8	Goal 11	P & R	Experienced the personal concern of one or more faculty members or administrators whose influence will have a lasting effect on me	4.08
9	Goal 10	P & R	Developed the habit of Ignatian discer nment: paying attention […], reflecting on its meaning, and making decisions based on what I discover	4.02
10	Goal 2	I	Mastered the knowledge and method c f inquiry of my major	4.01
11	Goal 14	P & R	Understood better the values/beliefs I inherited from my upbringing, incorporated experiences into my spiritual development, took responsibility for my […] journey	3.98
12	Goal 16	P & R	Developed my talents and skills as a leader committed to civic engagement	3.93
13	Goal 3	I	Understood the substance and methodologies of the Core curriculum disciplines and the differences among various disciplines' approach to solving problems	3.85
14	Goal 4	I	Explored the perennial questions that are at the heart of a liberal arts education	3.84
15	Goal 8	I	Did scholarly research and/or express ed my creativity in concrete ways	3.63
16	Goal 5	I	Recognized the roles of both faith and reason as integral components of a liberal arts education	3.56

Graphics 1 and 2, which follow, present results of particular interest to the Core curriculum.

Graphic 1 Goal 3: As an undergraduate at Boston College, I understood the substance and methodologies of the Core curriculum disciplines and the differences among various disciplines' approach to solving problems.

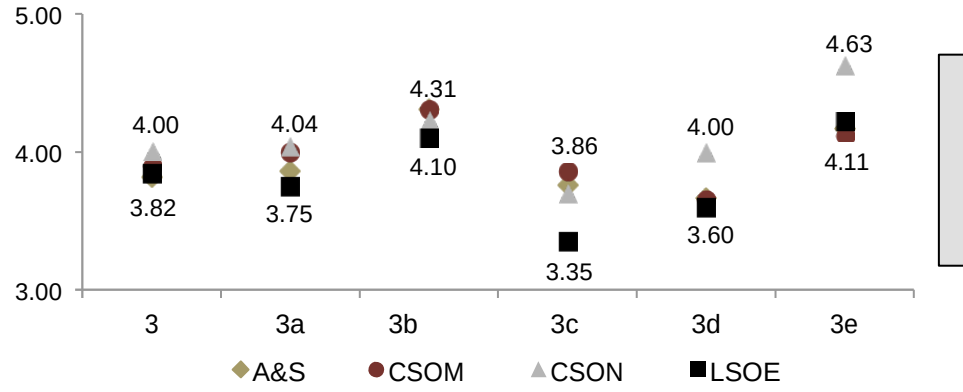
	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
All respondents	2.6%	7.6%	16.5%	49.2%	24.1%

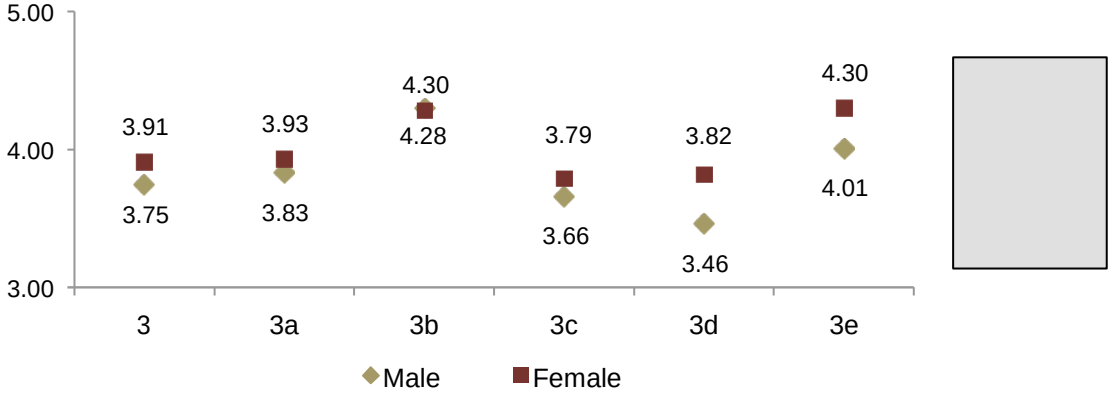
	A&S	CSOM	CSON	LSOE	Total Mean Score
Results by College	3.82	3.89	4.00	3.84	3.85

	Male	Female
Results by Demographics	3.75	3.91

Asian	Black	Hispanic	Two or More R/E	White	Did Not Report R/E	Internat'l
3.71	3.89	3.97	3.80	3.88	3.55	3.92

Sub-Goals, Results for All Respondents		Mean Score
3a)	Achieved a basic understanding of concepts and methods of scholarly investigation of the traditional scholarly disciplines through the BC Core	3.89
3b)	Acquired a broad general education during my four years	4.29
3c)	Discovered and followed up on new intellectual interests through the Core curriculum	3.74
3d)	Found that my education would have been too narrow without exposure to the many disciplines represented in the BC Core	3.67
3e)	Found that examining my values and integrating what I learn with the principles that guide my life is an ongoing process	4.19





Scale = 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree)
Graphs present range of mean ratings

BOSTON COLLEGE UNDERGRADUATE EXPERIENCE SURVEY
CORE CURRICULUM RESULTS

SURVEY OVERVIEW

The focus of the *Boston College Undergraduate Experience Survey* was to gather input on a broad range of student outcomes that reflect key components of the University's mission and its overall goals for our students. Administered to the Class of 2015 in the spring of their final semester, over 1,100 seniors responded to the survey, yielding a 51% participation rate. Generally, the survey's constructs clustered into either academic or social/spiritual areas; specifically within the academic-related domain, four questions centered on students' Core curriculum experiences, reflective of one of Boston College's goal statements: that upon graduation, "I understood the substance and methodologies of the Core curriculum disciplines".

The four survey items specific to this goal include:

As an undergraduate at Boston College, I…

- *Found that my Core classes led me to examine previous assumptions and ideas.*
- *Discovered new intellectual interests through the Core curriculum.*
- *Gained a broad foundation in a range of Core curriculum disciplines.*
- *Understood the key concepts of the Core curriculum disciplines.*

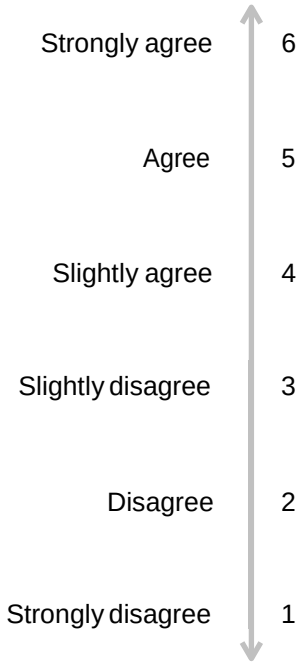
RESULTS RECAP

Overall results for these four items were quite positive:

- Mean scores all approach *agree* (based on a 1, strongly disagree to 6, strongly agree scale), indicating a high level of endorsement for each of the statements.
- Nursing and Management students typically offered the highest ratings.
- Students' narratives cited the Core's ability to expose one to new ideas and models and how its influence has helped to shape perspectives.

OVERALL RESULTS

Across the four Core-related questions, the majority of students (at least six out of 10) *agree* or *strongly agree* with each statement.



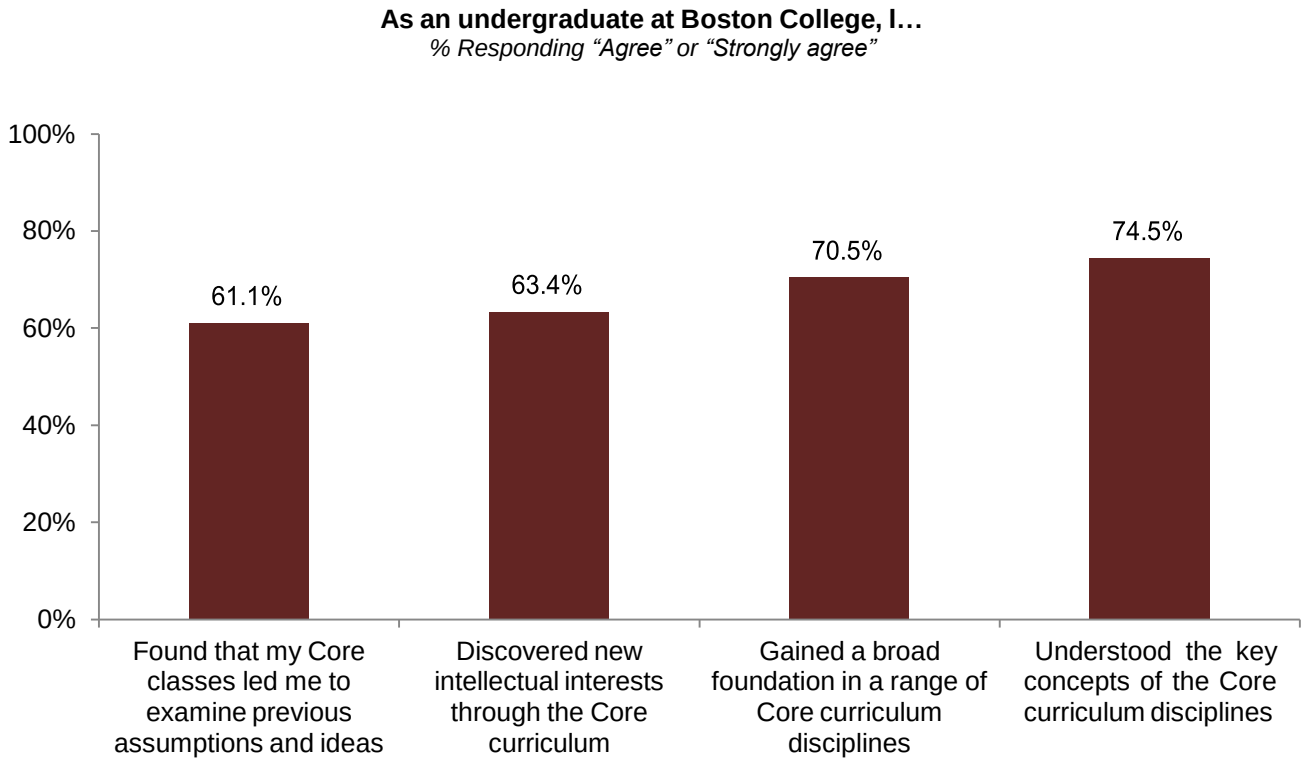
Understood the key concepts
Gained a broad foundation
Discovered new intellectual interests; Examined previous assumptions and ideas

While close to a third of participants (29.1%) *strongly agree* that they had "discovered new intellectual interests through the Core curriculum", there was a distribution of responses to this statement with about 20% of seniors disagreeing with this item. Seniors responded most positively to "understood the key concepts of the Core curriculum disciplines," with three-quarters of participants (74.5%) responding *agree* or *strongly agree.* Similarly, 70.5% *agree* or *strongly agree* that they "gained a broad foundation in a range of Core curriculum disciplines".

Table 1: Overall Results

As an undergraduate at Boston College, I…	**Strongly disagree (1)**	**Disagree (2)**	**Slightly disagree (3)**	**Slightly agree (4)**	**Agree (5)**	**Strongly agree (6)**	**Mean**
Found that my Core classes led me to examine previous assumptions and ideas.	2.1%	5.6%	9.1%	22.0%	35.8%	25.3%	4.60
Discovered new intellectual interests through the Core curriculum.	3.5%	6.3%	8.6%	18.2%	34.3%	29.1%	4.61
Gained a broad foundation in a range of Core curriculum disciplines.	1.6%	2.9%	4.6%	20.3%	43.4%	27.1%	4.82
Understood the key concepts of the Core curriculum disciplines.	1.2%	2.5%	3.8%	18.0%	49.3%	25.2%	4.87

Chart 1: Overall Results



While fewer students, roughly six out of 10, indicated that they *agree* or *strongly agree* that they "found that my Core classes led me to examine previous assumptions and ideas" or that they "discovered new intellectual interests through the Core curriculum", students' comments did acknowledge the Core's unique ability to redirect them from their established interests to ones that are truly valued, albeit new, thanks to the Core's emphasis on exploration:

> *I like that the Core gave me the opportunity to explore classes I didn't know I was interested in. For one, I am grateful I took sociology courses because it helped me question things more and remember that each person is important. [Arts & Sciences Senior]*

> *I really valued the Core curriculum and the opportunities that arose from it in regards to being able to study entirely new subject areas. [Arts & Sciences Senior]*

> *The Core curriculum, while not perfect, pushed me to study things I probably never would have studied otherwise. BC's liberal arts curriculum has helped me become a well-rounded, open person and has helped me fine-tune my critical thinking and writing skills. [Arts & Sciences Senior]*

> *I value how holistic my time at BC has been. Yes, the Core is daunting, but I would have never taken some of the classes. My religious quest and Capstone classes were ones that really challenged me spiritually and made me reevaluate how I look at life and how I should live. [Management Senior]*

While exposure to new subject areas was appreciated by many, some students commented on the perceived restrictiveness of the Core.

I value my education, though I wish I could have had the flexibility to take classes more aligned with my interests. I really do like the fact that BC takes a vested interest in having its students establish a broad base to their education (i.e., arts, sciences, humanities), though I wish I were trusted in taking a bit more of a 'driver-seat' role in that process; perhaps students should, in the future, be able to present a case for a certain regimen of courses in lieu of various Core requirements. [Arts & Sciences Senior]

I also really valued the idea of the Core curriculum because it allowed me to take a variety of courses in varied disciplines; however I sometimes felt that the choices of classes which satisfied the Core requirements were narrow and limited. [Arts & Sciences Senior]

RESULTS BY SCHOOL

Table 2 presents the average response to each item by school. Across all four questions, Lynch School of Education (LSOE) students had the lowest mean response whereas Carroll School of Management (CSOM) and Connell School of Nursing (CSON) students reported the highest average response to each of the Core curriculum items.

Table 2: Results by School

As an undergraduate at Boston College, I…	**Arts & Sciences**	**Education**	**Management**	**Nursing**
Found that my Core classes led me to examine previous assumptions and ideas.	4.59	4.36	4.70 ✓	4.70 ✓
Discovered new intellectual interests through the Core curriculum.	4.59	4.22	4.78	4.85 ✓
Gained a broad foundation in a range of Core curriculum disciplines.	4.78	4.66	5.01	5.04 ✓
Understood the key concepts of the Core curriculum disciplines.	4.81	4.74	5.10	5.17 ✓

✓= Highest mean rating; scale: 1, strongly disagree to 6, strong agree

The most substantive difference across schools was in response to “discovered new intellectual interests through the Core curriculum,” with a statistically significant difference in mean scores between CSON (mean rating of 4.85) and LSOE (mean rating of 4.22). In fact, only half (49.4%) of LSOE students responded that they *agree* or *strongly agree* that they “discovered new intellectual interests through the Core curriculum”, while over 70% of CSON and CSOM students *agree* or *strongly agree* to this outcome statement. Despite these somewhat lower ratings (with the exception of CSON students), participants did note that the Core’s influence supported them in their discernment journey thanks to is ability to open minds and offer opportunities.

> *The Core changed my outlook on the career I thought I wanted and now I am doing something totally different that truly brings me joy. [Arts & Sciences Senior]*
>
> *I changed my path in life based on a Core class (Religious Quest). [Arts & Sciences Senior]*
>
> *Core curriculum -- especially Philosophy which has allowed me to challenge my values and see what is ethical/how my conscience works. [Arts & Sciences Senior]*

As an undergraduate at Boston College, I…

Chart 2: Found that my Core classes led me to examine my previous assumptions and ideas

No statistically significant differences

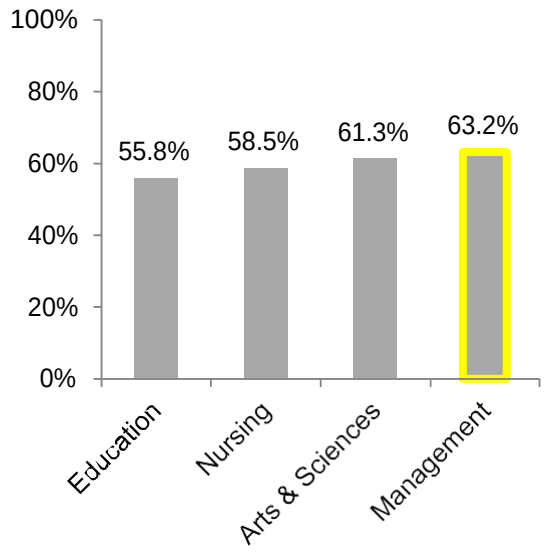


Chart 3: Discovered new intellectual interests through the Core curriculum

Statistically higher ratings for Nursing vs. Education

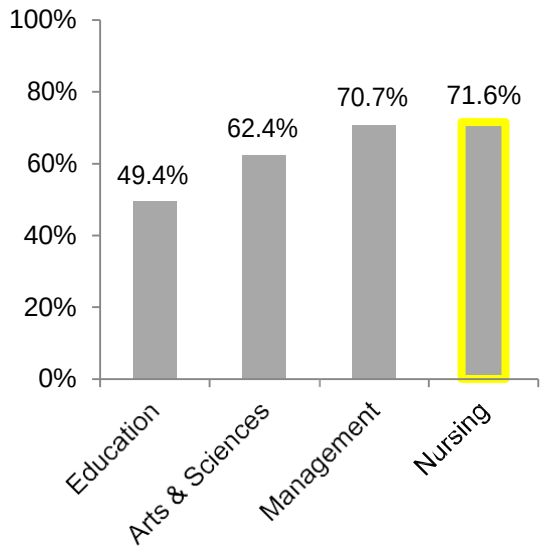


Chart 4: Gained a broad foundation in a range of Core curriculum disciplines

Highest ratings for Management and Nursing

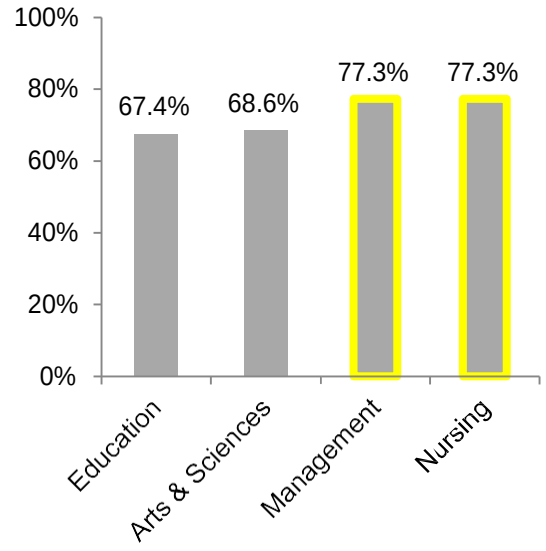
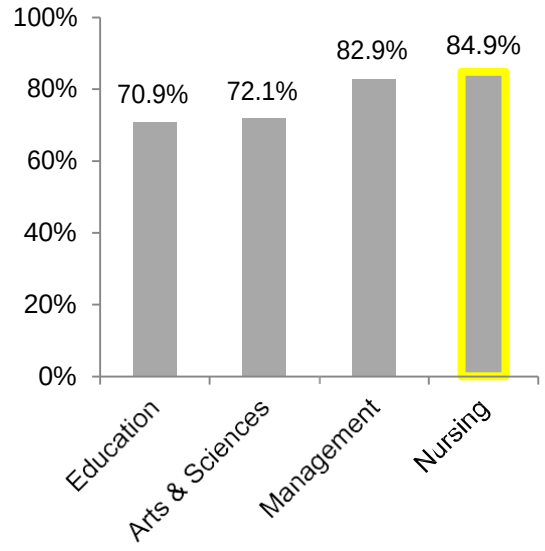


Chart 5: Understood the key concepts of the Core curriculum disciplines

Statistically higher ratings for Management and Nursing



Highlighted bars indicate the highest rating by school; values indicate % responding agree or strongly agree

SUMMARY

While the positive quantitative results reflect the strengths of the Core, seniors' comments on the Core's contribution to their personal growth while at Boston College were quite compelling:

I am confident that as I leave Boston College and prepare to apply and hopefully attend medical school I am prepared to face difficult ethical decisions in my patients' treatment plans and I believe that because of the University Core (Philosophy specifically), I have a strong foundation on which I can weigh the facts and make those difficult decisions and defend those decisions articulately. [Arts & Sciences Senior]

I value the broad education that I received. Some of the classes I enjoyed the most were my Philosophy and Theology courses. As a CSOM student, it was a completely different classroom atmosphere that allowed me to be more introspective about the material and about myself. It truly was a privilege to take these Core courses because it allowed me to grow as a person. [Management Senior]

I value the integration of social justice and world experience with education. I was given the chance to think about so many different topics from various points of view that I never would have had the chance to before. I also appreciate the liberal arts Core approach to learning and the unique integration of philosophy and theology in the Perspectives course BC offers. [Education Senior]

Although I had complained about having to take courses I previously had no interest in, the Core curriculum allowed me to foster friendships with people I most likely never would have talked to. There were days we would leave class and continue our discussions on philosophy or theology, allowing me to gain more insight into the perspectives of my peers. [Arts & Sciences Senior]

I really came to value the Core curriculum. I feel that I received a very good education and feel prepared to move on to the next stage of education in my life. I value the environment at Boston College where students do not feel that they need to shy away from discussion of spirituality or deep questions, i.e., philosophical ones. [Arts & Sciences Senior]

Noteworthy is that the purpose of the Undergraduate Experience Survey was far-reaching and yet remarks specific to the Core were prevalent in the set of comments offered by seniors in response to the general question: *What do you value about your Boston College experience*? As the Core works to expand its integrated offerings within the overall spirit of renewal, it is clear that there is a tremendous foundation upon which the new Core curriculum can be built.

Core Assessment Evaluation Question Summary - Fall 2015

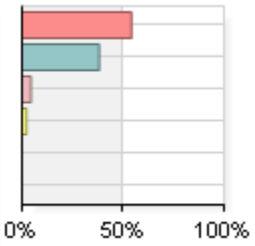
Response Table

Fall 2015	
Raters	**Students**
Responded	6168
Invited	7214
Response Ratio	85.50%

Core Course Questions

1. After taking this Core course, I understand the basic concepts, methods, and/or content of the course's discipline.

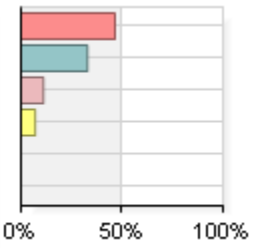
5 Strongly Agree	3263	54.18%
4 Agree	2300	38.19%
3 Uncertain	262	4.35%
2 Disagree	130	2.16%
1 Strongly Disagree	48	0.80%
N/A N/A	19	0.32%
Total	6022	



Statistics	Value
Response Count	6022
Mean	4.43
Median	5.00
Standard Deviation	+/-0.75

2. This Core course helped me think differently about other disciplines.

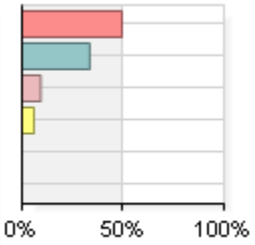
5 Strongly Agree	2788	46.54%
4 Agree	1972	32.92%
3 Uncertain	667	11.13%
2 Disagree	422	7.04%
1 Strongly Disagree	112	1.87%
N/A N/A	30	0.50%
Total	5991	



Statistics	Value
Response Count	5991
Mean	4.16
Median	4.00
Standard Deviation	+/-1.00

3. This Core course helped me make connections and integrate what I have learned elsewhere.

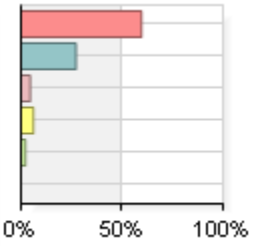
5 Strongly Agree	2946	49.41%
4 Agree	1994	33.45%
3 Uncertain	548	9.19%
2 Disagree	349	5.85%
1 Strongly Disagree	102	1.71%
N/A N/A	23	0.39%
Total	5962	



Statistics	Value
Response Count	5962
Mean	4.23
Median	4.00
Standard Deviation	+/-0.96

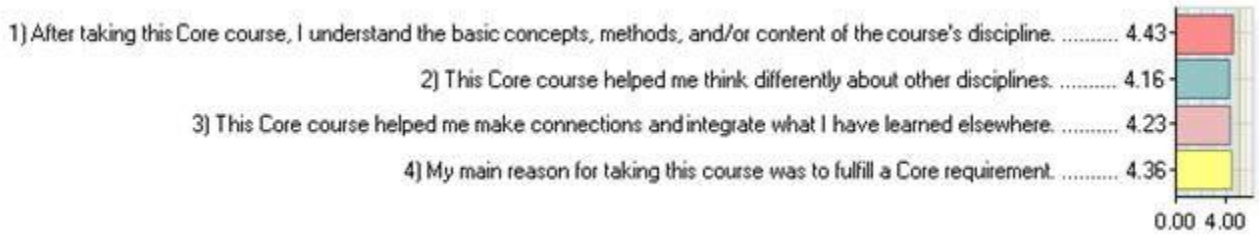
4. My main reason for taking this course was to fulfill a Core requirement.

5 Strongly Agree	3570	59.58%
4 Agree	1628	27.17%
3 Uncertain	268	4.47%
2 Disagree	365	6.09%
1 Strongly Disagree	132	2.20%
N/A N/A	29	0.48%
Total	5992	



Statistics	Value
Response Count	5992
Mean	4.36
Median	5.00
Standard Deviation	+/-0.98

Core Course Questions



Core Course Questions

After taking this Core course, I understand the basic concepts, methods, and/or content of the course's discipline.

	Resp	Mean
Overall	6003	4.43
English	1424	4.49
History	1525	4.28
Philosophy	2013	4.48
Theology	1041	4.46

This Core course helped me think differently about other disciplines.

	Resp	Mean
Overall	5961	4.15
English	1406	4.14
History	1506	3.84
Philosophy	2007	4.35
Theology	1042	4.27

This Core course helped me make connections and integrate what I have learned elsewhere.

	Resp	Mean
Overall	5939	4.23
English	1402	4.28
History	1501	3.96
Philosophy	1999	4.39
Theology	1037	4.28

My main reason for taking this course was to fulfill a Core requirement.

	Resp	Mean
Overall	5963	4.38
English	1411	4.38
History	1512	4.51
Philosophy	2004	4.24
Theology	1036	4.38

Core Assessment Evaluation Question Summary - Spring 2016

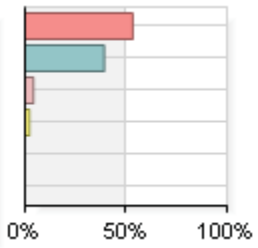
Response Table

Spring 2016	
Raters	**Students**
Responded	5854
Invited	6798
Response Ratio	86.11%

Core: Select your agreement level with the following statements about this course.

1. After taking this Core course, I understand the basic concepts, methods, and/or content of the course's discipline.

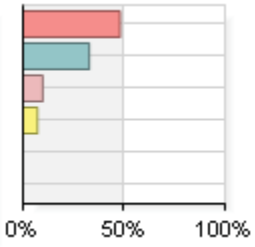
5 Strongly Agree	3041	53.22%
4 Agree	2235	39.11%
3 Uncertain	237	4.15%
2 Disagree	123	2.15%
1 Strongly Disagree	46	0.81%
N/A N/A	32	0.56%
Total	5714	



Statistics	Value
Response Count	5714
Mean	4.43
Median	5.00
Standard Deviation	+/-0.75

2. This Core course helped me think differently about other disciplines.

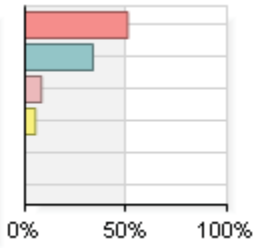
5 Strongly Agree	2730	48.02%
4 Agree	1863	32.77%
3 Uncertain	550	9.67%
2 Disagree	406	7.14%
1 Strongly Disagree	100	1.76%
N/A N/A	36	0.63%
Total	5685	



Statistics	Value
Response Count	5685
Mean	4.19
Median	4.00
Standard Deviation	+/-1.00

3. This Core course helped me make connections and integrate what I have learned elsewhere.

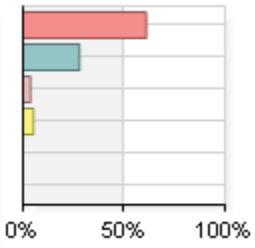
5 Strongly Agree	2877	50.79%
4 Agree	1907	33.66%
3 Uncertain	460	8.12%
2 Disagree	288	5.08%
1 Strongly Disagree	104	1.84%
N/A N/A	29	0.51%
Total	5665	



Statistics	Value
Response Count	5665
Mean	4.27
Median	5.00
Standard Deviation	+/-0.94

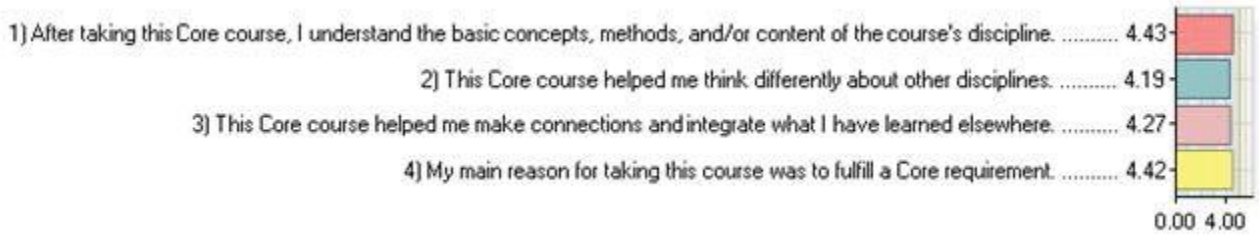
4. My main reason for taking this course was to fulfill a Core requirement.

5 Strongly Agree	3456	60.95%
4 Agree	1585	27.95%
3 Uncertain	207	3.65%
2 Disagree	294	5.19%
1 Strongly Disagree	93	1.64%
N/A N/A	35	0.62%
Total	5670	



Statistics	Value
Response Count	5670
Mean	4.42
Median	5.00
Standard Deviation	+/-0.91

Core: Select your agreement level with the following statements about this course.



Core: Select your agreement level with the following statements about this course.

After taking this Core course, I understand the basic concepts, methods, and/or content of the course's discipline.

	Resp	Mean
Overall	5682	4.47
English	1122	4.37
German Studies	11	4.45
History	1629	4.32
Philosophy	1658	4.56
Romance Languages and Literatures	3	4.67
Theology	1259	4.44

This Core course helped me think differently about other disciplines.

	Resp	Mean
Overall	5649	4.27
English	1117	3.98
German Studies	12	4.25
History	1616	3.95
Philosophy	1647	4.47
Romance Languages and Literatures	3	4.67
Theology	1254	4.30

This Core course helped me make connections and integrate what I have learned elsewhere.

	Resp	Mean
Overall	5636	4.36
English	1113	4.12
German Studies	11	4.45
History	1611	4.12
Philosophy	1647	4.50
Romance Languages and Literatures	3	4.67
Theology	1251	4.30

My main reason for taking this course was to fulfill a Core requirement.

	Resp	Mean
Overall	5635	3.70
English	1118	4.58
German Studies	11	2.09
History	1613	4.45

Core Renewal Pilot Courses 2015-2016

Core Category	Course Name (Course Number)	Instructors	Semester Offered	# Enrolled
Complex Problems	Global Implications of Climate Change (SOCY1501/ EESC1501)	Brian Gareau (Soc) Tara Pisani Gareau (EES)	Fall 2015	74
Complex Problems	Understanding Race, Gender and Violence (HIST1503/ SOCY1503)	Marilynn Johnson (Hist) Shawn McGuffey (Soc)	Fall 2015	77
Enduring Questions	Truth-Telling in Literature (ENGL1701) Truth-Telling in History (HIST1701)	Allison Adair (Engl) Sylvia Sellers-Garcia (Hist)	Fall 2015	16
Enduring Questions	Humans, Nature and Creativity (ENGL1703) Inquiring About Humans and Nature (PHIL1703)	Min Song (Engl) Holly Vande Wall (Phil)	Fall 2015	18
Enduring Questions	Reading the Body (ENGL1702) The Body in Sickness and Health (SOCY1702)	Laura Tanner (Engl) Jane Ashley (CSON)	Fall 2015	19
				Fall Total = 204
Complex Problems	Genocide and Crimes Against Humanity (HIST1501/ENGL1501)	Maxim Shrayer (Slav) Devin Pendas (Hist)	Spring 2016	76
Enduring Questions	Epidemics, Disease and Humanity (BIOL1701) Devising Theatre: Disease as Metaphor (THTR1701)	Kathleen Dunn (Bio) Scott Cummings (Thtr)	Spring 2016	15
Enduring Questions	Power, Justice, War: The Ancients (POLI1701) Power, Justice, War: The Moderns (PHIL1701)	Robert Bartlett (Poli Sci) Aspen Brinton (Phil)	Spring 2016	17
Enduring Questions	Spiritual Exercises: Engagement, Empathy, Ethics (THEO1701) Aesthetic Exercises: Engagement, Empathy, Ethics (MUSA1701)	Brian Robinette (Theo) Daniel Callahan (Musc)	Spring 2016	15
				Spring Total = 123

Note: One student enrolled in both a CP course and an EQ course pair in the fall. Twenty-nine students enrolled in pilot courses in both the fall and the spring.

Core Renewal Pilot Courses 2016-2017

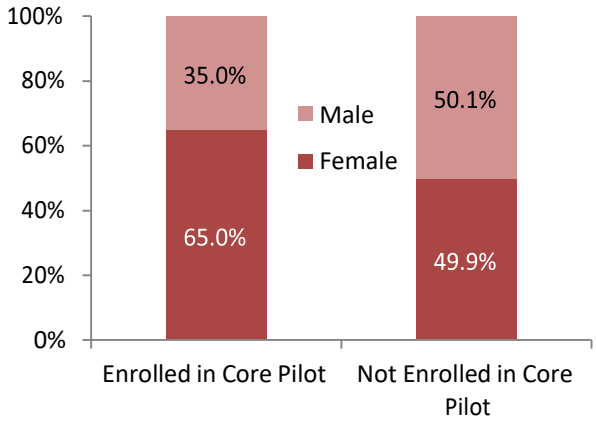
Core Category	Course Name (Course Number)	Instructors	Semester Offered
Complex Problems	Planet in Peril: The History and Future of Human Impacts on the Planet (SOCY1509/ HIST1505)	Juliet Schor (Soc) Prasannan Parthasarathi (Hist)	Fall 2016
Complex Problems	Can Creativity Save the World? (THTR1501/ SOCY1507)	Crystal Tiala (Thtr) Spencer Harrison (CSOM)	Fall 2016
Enduring Questions	Truth-Telling in Literature (ENGL1701) Truth-Telling in History (HIST1701)	Allison Adair (Engl) Sylvia Sellers-Garcia (Hist)	Fall 2016 (repeated from AY16)
Enduring Questions	Humans, Nature and Creativity (ENGL1703) Inquiring About Humans and Nature (PHIL1703)	Min Song (Engl) Holly Vande Wall (Phil)	Fall 2016 (repeated from AY16)
Enduring Questions	Love, Gender and Marriage: Writing and Rewriting the Tradition (ENGL1704) Love, Gender and Marriage: the Western Literary Tradition (RLRL3373)	Treseanne Ainsworth (Engl) Franco Mormando (RRL)	Fall 2016
Enduring Questions	Reading and Writing Health, Illness, and Disability (ENGL1705) The Social Construction of Health and Illness (SOCY1703)	Amy Boesky (Engl) Sara Moorman (Soc)	Fall 2016
Enduring Questions	Spiritual Exercises: Engagement, Empathy, Ethics (THEO1701) Aesthetic Exercises: Engagement, Empathy, Ethics (MUSA1701)	Brian Robinette (Theo) Daniel Callahan (Musc)	Fall 2016 (repeated from AY16)
Complex Problems	A Perfect Moral Storm: The Science and Ethics of Climate Change (EESC1505/PHIL1501)	Corinne Wong (EES) David Storey (Phil)	Spring 2017
Complex Problems	Performing Politics (POLI1031/THTR1503)	Luke Jorgenson (Thtr) Jennie Purnell (Poli Sci)	Spring 2017
Complex Problems	Social Problems on the Silver Screen (HIST1507/FILM1501)	John Michalczyk (Film) Lynn Lyerly (Hist)	Spring 2017

Enduring Questions	God and the Good Life (THEO1702) What is the Good Life? Tolstoy to Chekov (SLAV1161)	Stephen Pope (Theo) Thomas Epstein (Slav)	Spring 2017
Enduring Questions	Narrating Black Intimacies (ENGL1708) Black Intimacy & Intersectionality (SOCY1704)	Rhonda Frederick (Engl) Shawn McGuffey (Soc)	Spring 2017
Enduring Questions	Living in the Material World (ENGL1709) Living in the Material World (CHEM1701)	Dunwei Wang (Chem) Elizabeth Kowaleski Wallace (Engl)	Spring 2017
Enduring Questions	Family Matters: Stories of Adoption and Kinship (ENGL1710) Family Matters: Histories of Adoption and Kinship (HIST1702)	Arissa Oh (Hist) James Smith (Engl)	Spring 2017
Enduring Questions	Building a Habitable Planet: Geoscience Perspectives (EESC1701) Building a Habitable Planet: Theological Perspectives (THEO1703)	Ethan Baxter (EES) Natana Delong-Bas (Theo)	Spring 2017
Enduring Questions	Human Disease: Plagues, Pathogens, and Chronic Disorders (BIOL1702) Human Disease: Health, the Economy, and Society (ECON1701)	Kathleen Dunn (Biol) Sam Richardson (Econ)	Spring 2017

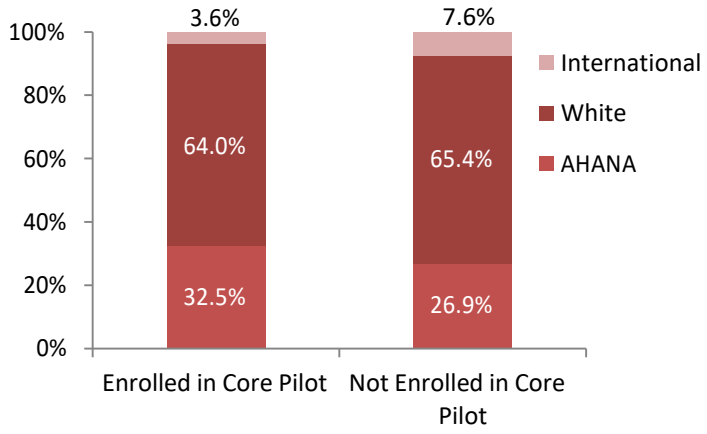
Core Renewal – Fall 2015

Core Pilot Demographic Profile

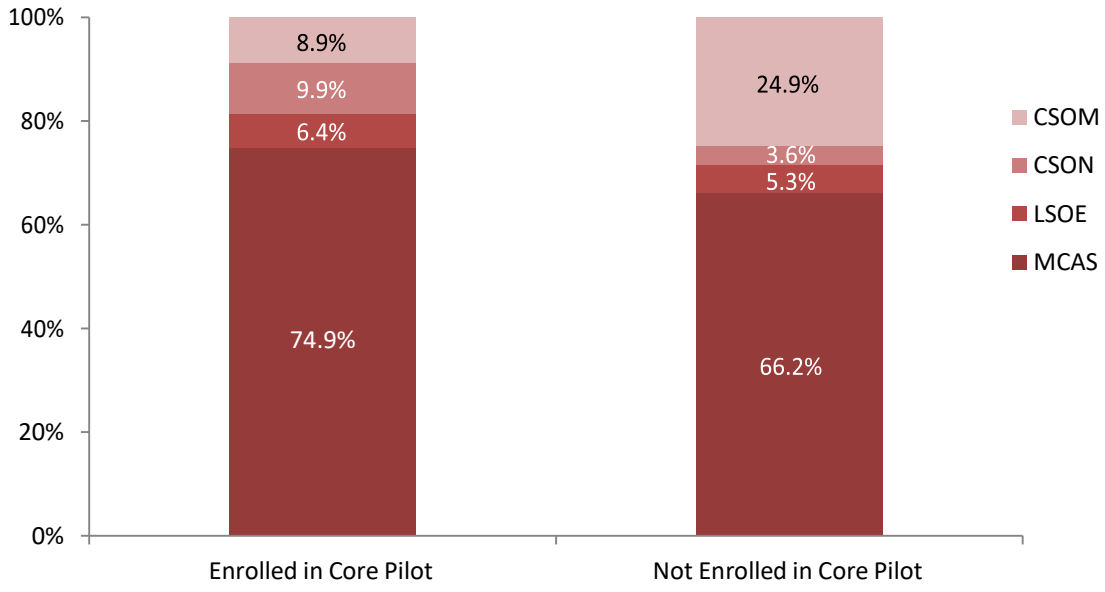
Core Pilot Course Enrollment by Gender



Core Pilot Course Enrollment by Race/Ethnicity

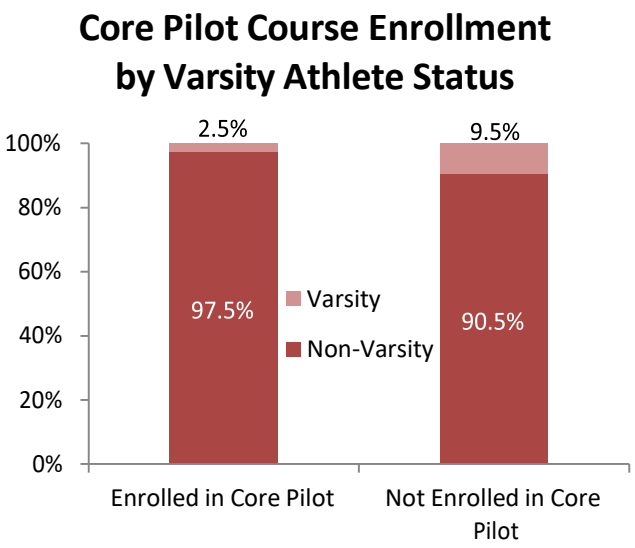


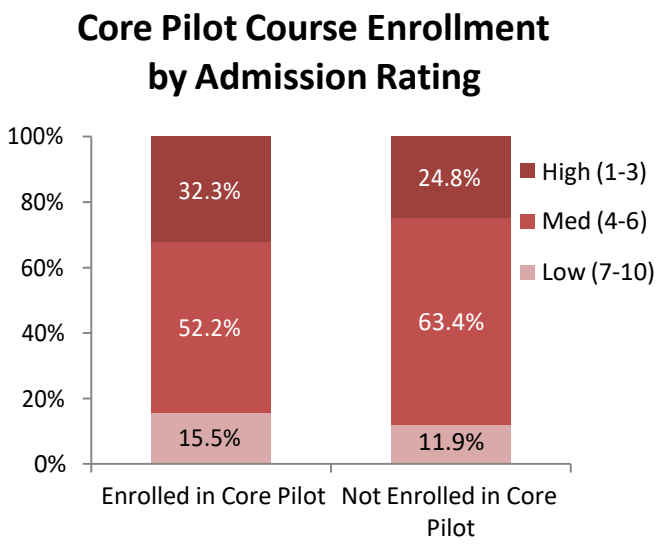
Core Pilot Course Enrollment by School



Notes:

1. Core Renewal Pilot Course enrollment = 203 students (8.7% of the Class of 2019) in Fall 2015.
2. Core Renewal Pilot Course students with major "undeclared" = 71 (35.0% of pilot course enrollment).
3. Top 4 majors represented in Core Renewal Pilot Courses: Political Science (N = 21), Nursing (N = 20), Biology (N = 18), Economics (N= 12).



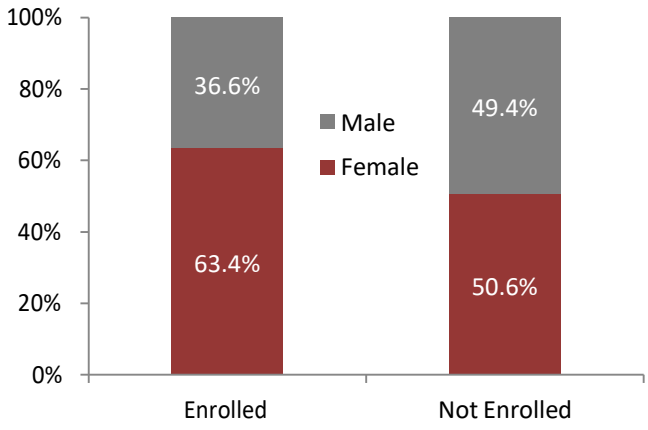


Enrollment in Core Renewal Courses Fall 2015 Demographic Comparison of Pilot Course Types		
	Complex Problems	**Enduring Questions**
Total Enrollment	**150**	**53**
By Gender		
Female	63.3%	69.8%
Male	36.7%	30.2%
By Race/Ethnicity*		
Asian	8.9%	9.8%
Black or African American	8.2%	2.0%
Hispanic of Any Race	15.1%	11.8%
International	2.1%	7.8%
Two or More Races	2.1%	3.9%
White	63.7%	64.7%
*Race/ethnicity data are presented for students who reported race/ethnicity. Of the students enrolled in Core Pilot Courses, 3.0% did not report and are not included in the total for this category.		
By School		
Carroll School of Management	8.0%	11.3%
Connell School of Nursing	9.3%	11.3%
Lynch School of Education	6.0%	7.5%
Morrissey College of Arts & Sciences	76.7%	69.8%

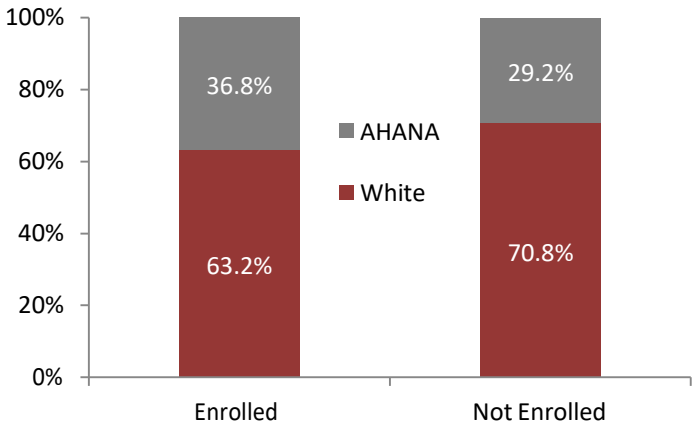
Core Renewal Pilot Courses – Spring 2016

Demographic Profile

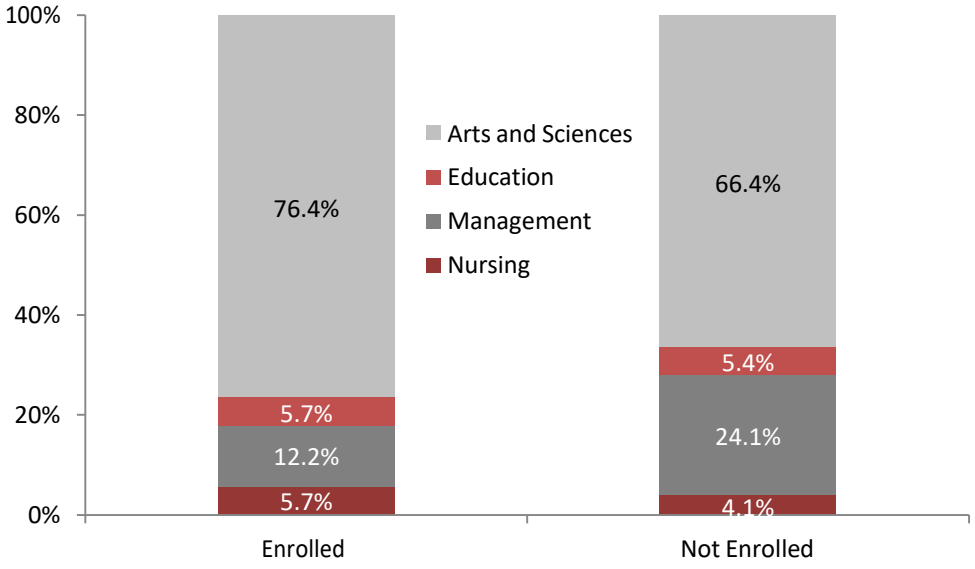
Pilot Course Enrollment by Gender



Pilot Course Enrollment by Race/Ethnicity

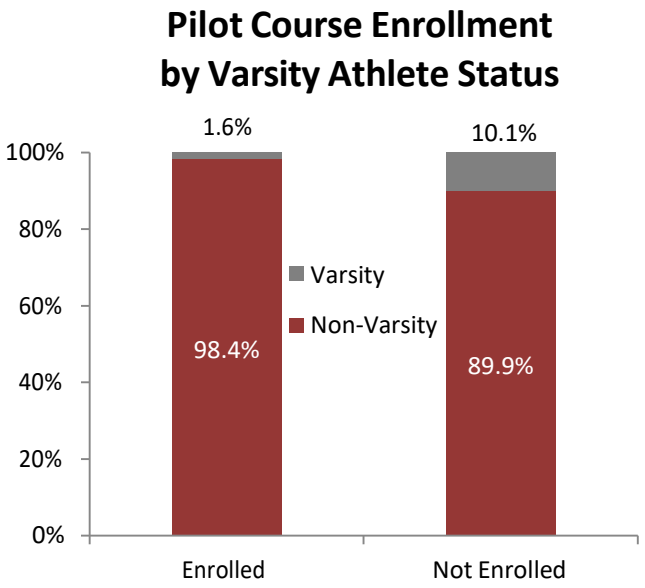


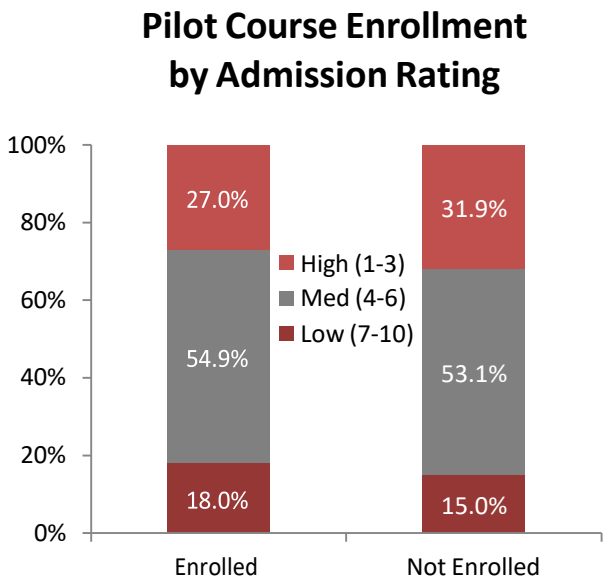
Pilot Course Enrollment by School



Notes:

1. Spring 2016 pilot course enrollment = 123 (5.2% of the Class of 2019, plus one sophomore transfer student).
2. Spring 2016 pilot course students with major "undeclared" = 37 (30.1% of pilot course enrollment). Top majors represented: Biology (N= 13); Political Science (N=13); Psychology (N=8); Nursing (N=7).
3. Of the 203 pilot course students in fall 2015, 14.4% enrolled in a pilot course in spring 2016 (29 students, or 24.6% of spring pilot course enrollment).





Spring 2016 Enrollment in Pilot Courses Demographic Comparison of Pilot Course Types		
	Complex Problems	**Enduring Questions**
Total Enrollment	**76**	**47**
By Gender		
Female	69.7%	53.2%
Male	30.3%	46.8%
By Race/Ethnicity		
Single Race/Ethnicity		
American Indian or Alaska Native	0.0%	0.0%
Asian	13.9%	0.0%
Black or African American	4.2%	6.7%
Hispanic/Latino	22.2%	13.3%
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	0.0%	0.0%
White	55.6%	75.6%
Two or More Races/Ethnicity	4.2%	4.4%
Total AHANA students[1]	44.5%	24.4%
U.S. Citizens not reporting Race/Ethnicity	1.3%	2.1%
International students[2]	3.9%	4.3%
[1] AHANA values are based on U.S. Citizen or permanent resident students who report their race/ethnicity. [2] International students include nonresident aliens of all racial and ethnic groups including White.		
By School		
Arts & Sciences	69.7%	87.2%
Education	4.0%	8.5%
Management	18.4%	2.1%
Nursing	7.9%	2.1%

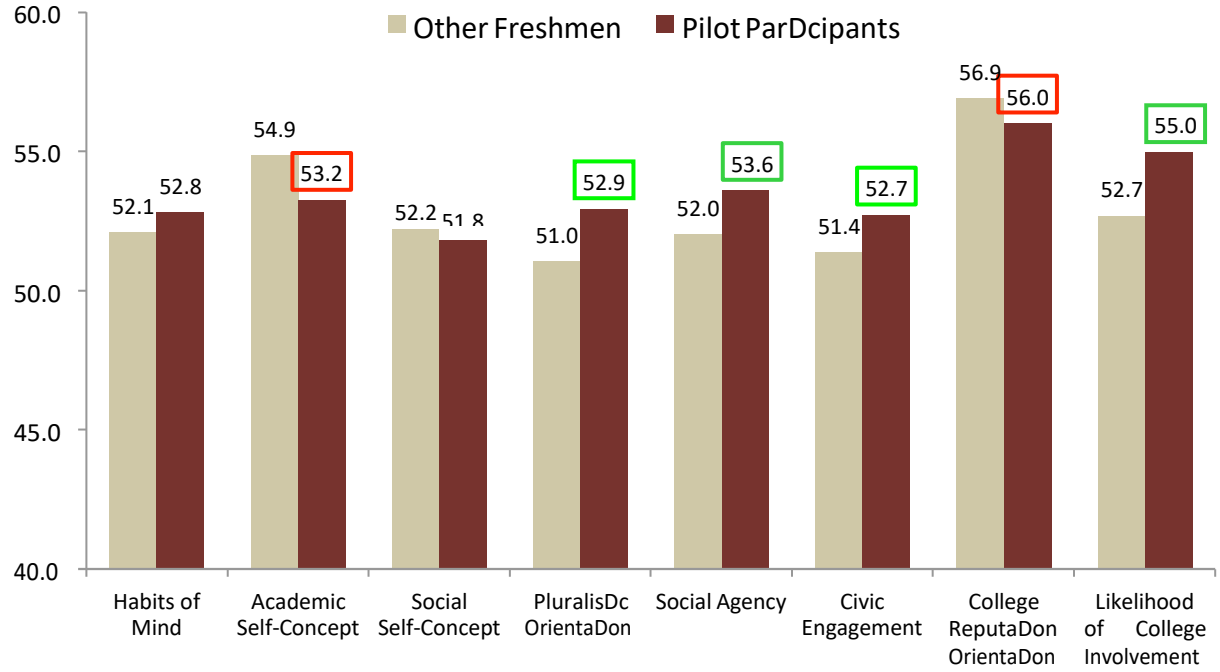
Core Renewal Pilot Courses

Results from The Freshman Survey

The Freshmen Survey (TFS) collects a range of demographic data and information about students' attitudes, experiences, goals and values. Multiple survey questions may cover one underlying trait (e.g., academic success or likelihood of college involvement). In order to facilitate analysis of these data, the Higher Education Research Institute (HERI) has created a series of "constructs" grounded in items from the survey. The constructs allow institutions to explore students' experiences and outcomes using measures that are more nuanced than responses to a single survey question. For the purpose of this report, the average contruct scores of students who participated in the 2015-2016 Core Renewal Pilot Courses were compared to the average contruct scores of all other Boston College freshmen

The eight constructs and their component measures are presented in greater detail on the following pages. Overall, Core Renewal Pilot participants scored statistically significantly higher on four measures, statistically significantly lower on two measures, and not significantly different on two measures:

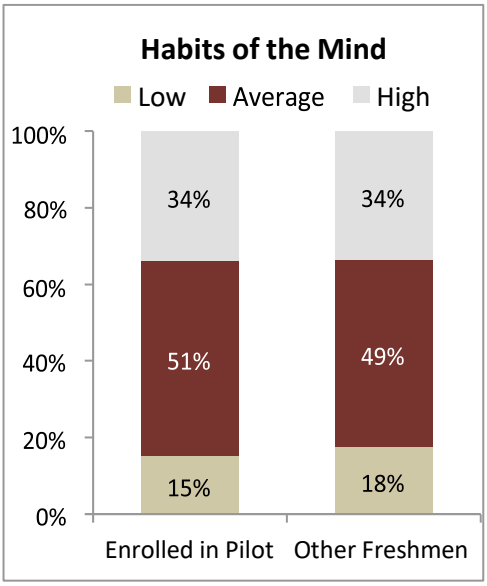
Significantly Higher	***Significantly Lower***	***No Significant Difference***
Civic Engagement	Academic Self-Concept	Social Self-Concept
Pluralistic Orientation	College Reputation Orientation	Habits of Mind
Social Agency		
Likelihood of College Involvement		



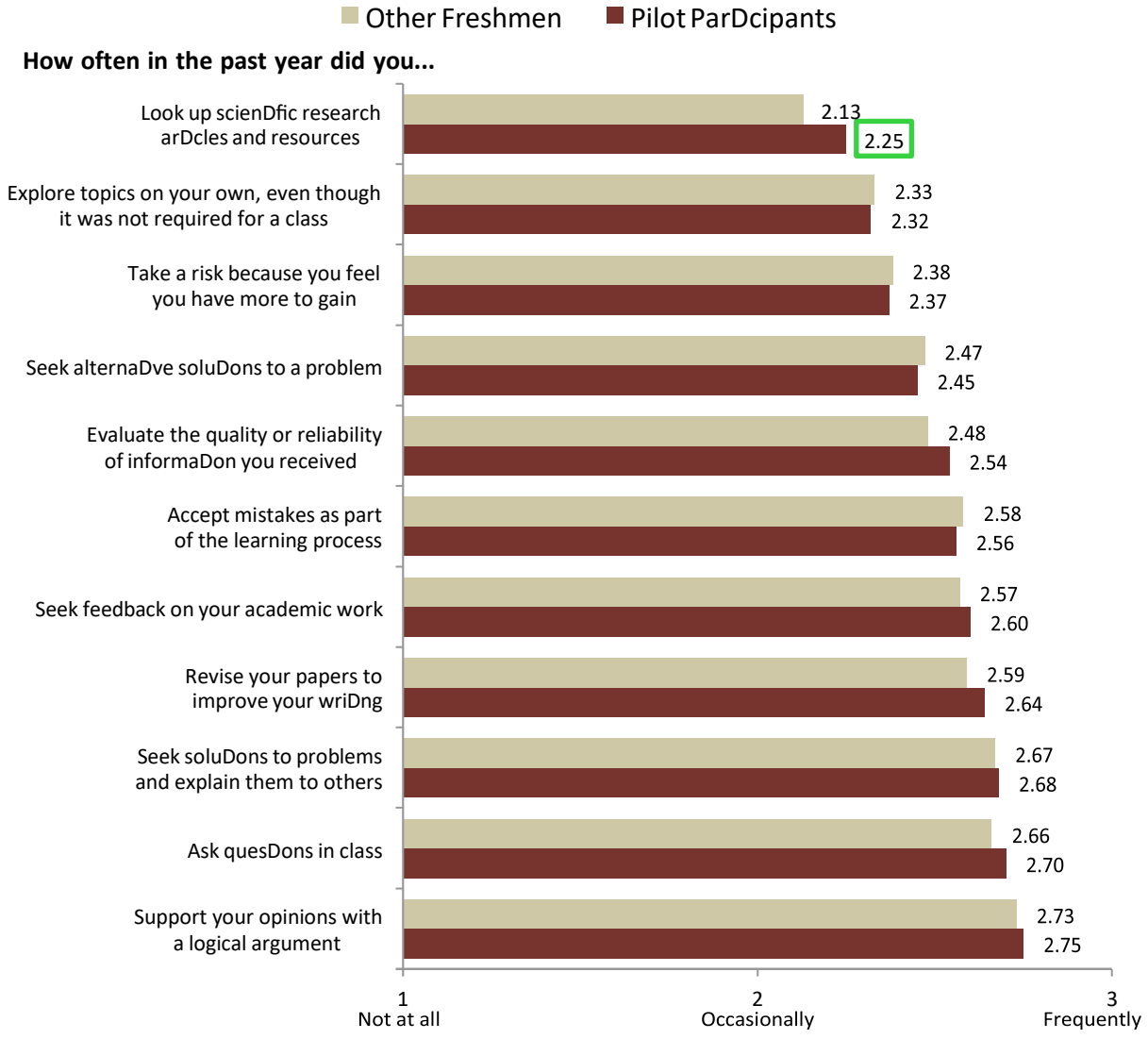
HABITS OF THE MIND CONSTRUCT

The Habits of Mind construct is unified measure of the behaviors and traits associated with academic success. These behaviors are seen as the foundation for lifelong learning.

There was no statistically significant difference between the average Habits of Mind construct score of participants in the Core Renewal Pilots and other Boston College freshmen. For a different perspecitve, the construct scores are categorized into "High", "Average", and "Low" score groups. The graphs to the right compares the percentage of freshmen who fall into each of those score categories.

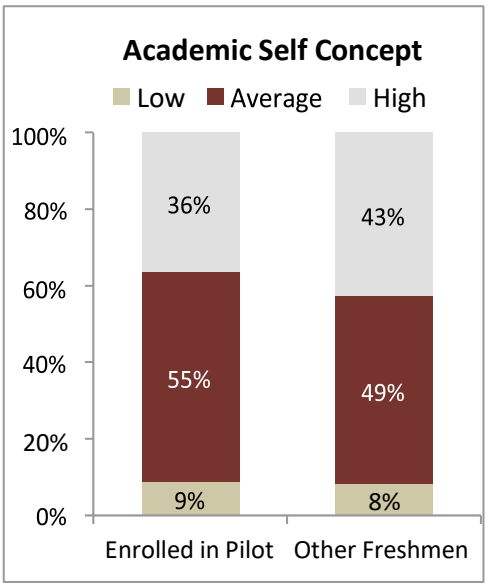


Of the eleven items comprising the Habits of Mind construct, participants in the Core Renewal Pilots scored statistically significantly *higher* than other Boston College freshmen on only one measure: *Look up scientific research articles and resources* ($p<.05$).



ACADEMIC SELF-CONCEPT CONSTRUCT

The Academic Self-Concept construct is a unified measure of students' beliefs about their abilities and confidence in academic environments.



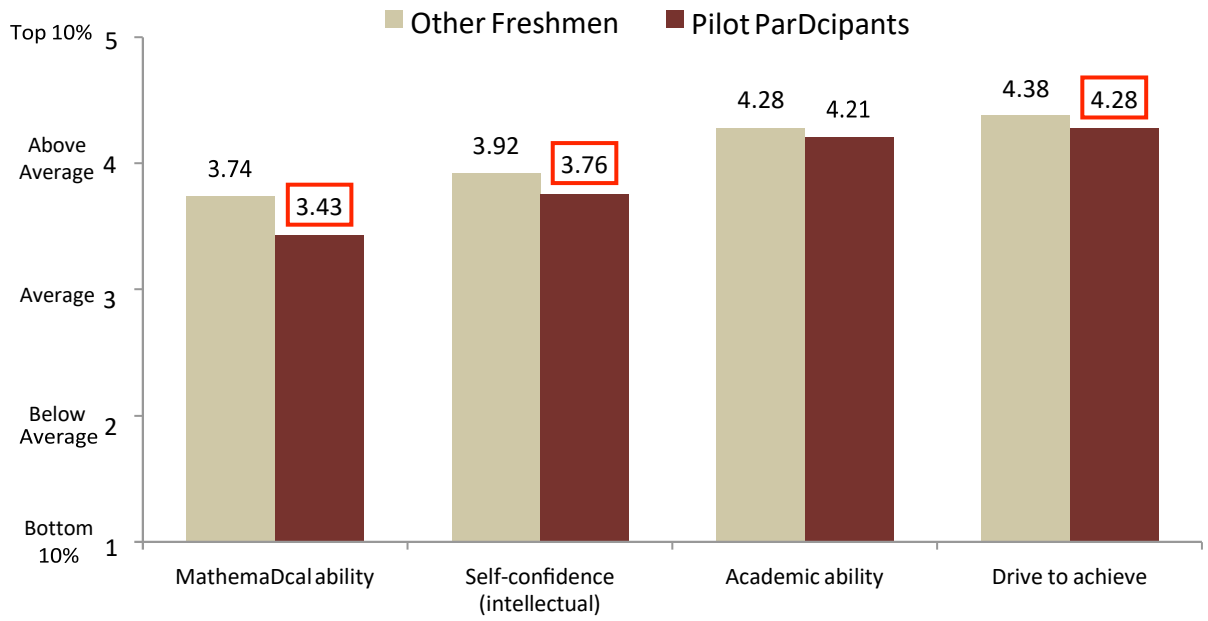
On the Academic Self-Concept construct participants in the Core Renewal Pilots, on average, scored statistically significantly *lower* than other Boston College freshmen (p<.001). For a different perspecitve, the construct scores are categorized into "High", "Average", and "Low" score groups. The graphs to the right compares the percentage of freshmen who fall into each of those score categories.

Four survey questions comprise the Academic Self-Concept construct:

Rate yourself on each of the following traits as compared with the average person your age

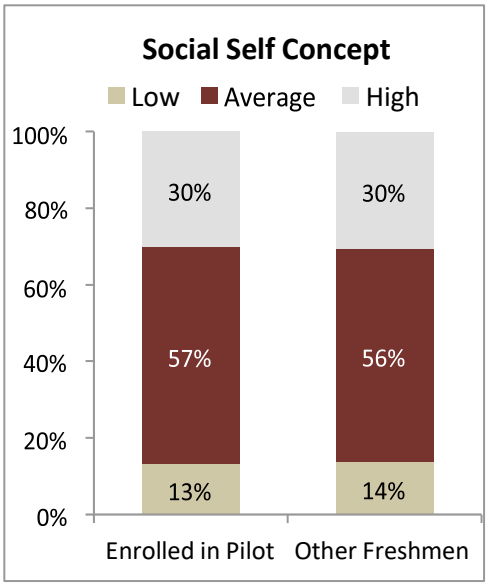
a. Academic ability
b. Mathematical ability
c. Self-confidence - intellectual
d. Drive to achieve

Participants in the Core Renewal Pilots, on average, scored statistically significantly *lower* than other Boston College freshmen on three of those measures: *Mathematical ability* (p<.001), *Intellectual Self-Confidence* (p<.01), and *Drive to Achieve* (p<.05).



SOCIAL SELF-CONCEPT CONSTRUCT

The Social Self-Concept construct is a unified measure of students' beliefs about their abilities and confidence in social situations.



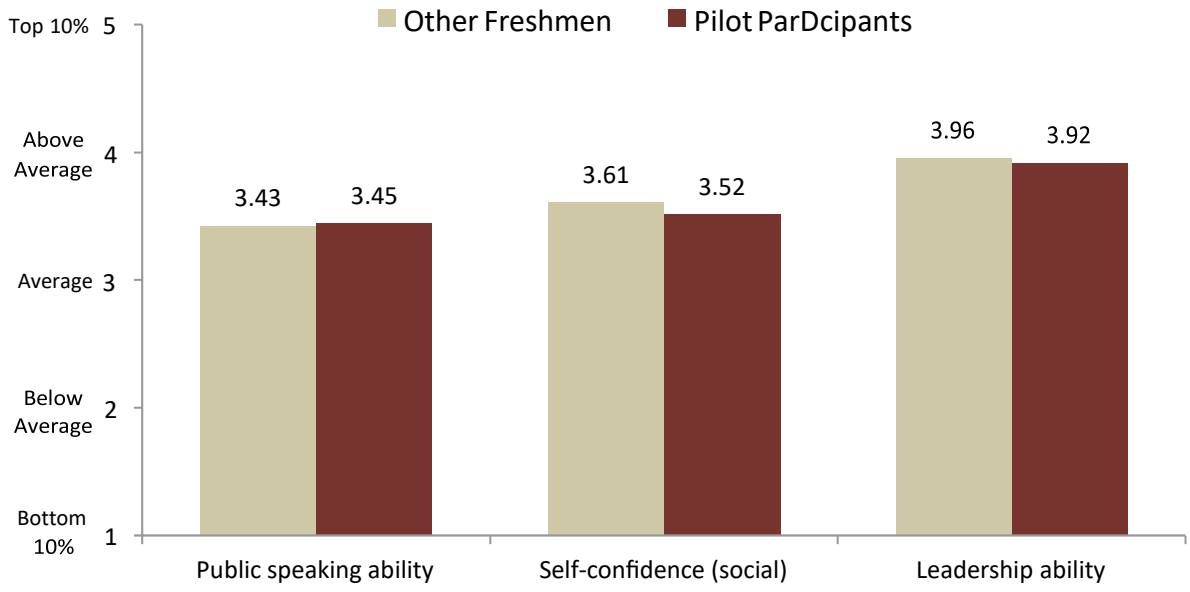
There was no statistically significant difference between the average Self-Concept construct score of participants in the Core Renewal Pilots and other Boston College freshmen. For a different perspecitve, the construct scores are categorized into "High", "Average", and "Low" score groups. The graphs to the right compares the percentage of freshmen who fall into each of those score categories.

Three survey questions comprise the Social Self-Concept construct:

Rate yourself on each of the following traits as compared with the average person your age

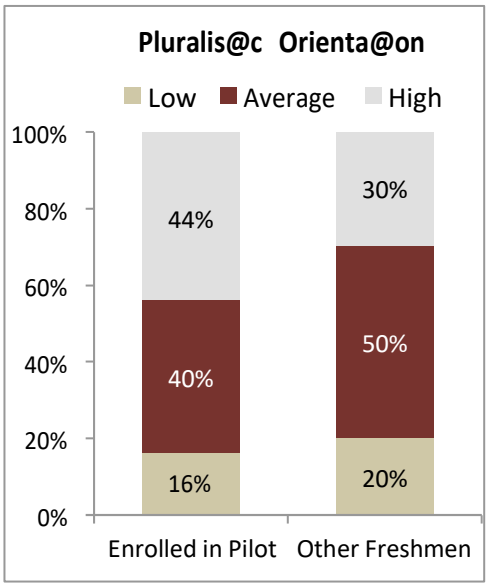
a. Self-confidence (social)
b. Leadership ability
c. Public speaking ability

There was no statistically significant difference between the average scores of participants in the Core Renewal Pilots and other Boston College freshmen on any of the construct's measures.



PLURALISTIC ORIENTATION CONSTRUCT

The Pluralistic Orientation construct measures skills and dispositions appropriate for living and working in a diverse society.



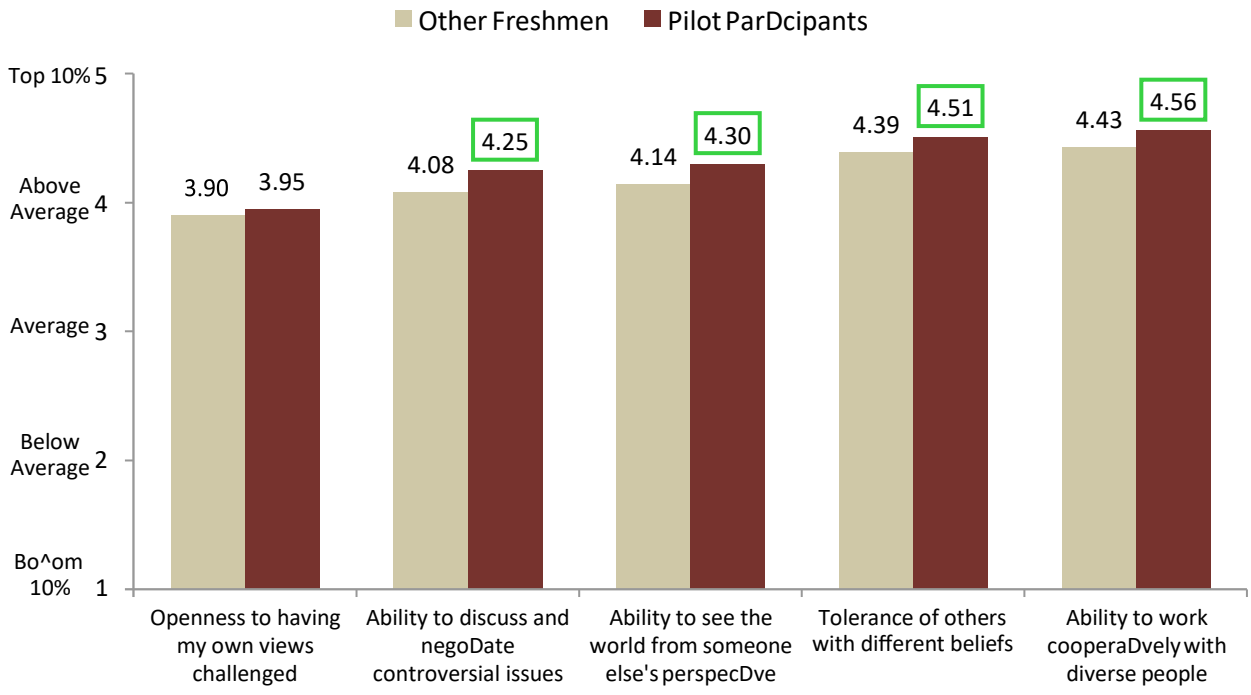
Participants in the Core Renewal Pilots, on average, scored statistically significantly *higher* than other Boston College freshmen on the Pluralistic Orientation construct (p<.001). For a different perspecitve, the construct scores are categorized into "High", "Average", and "Low" score groups. The graph to the right compares the percentage of freshmen who fall into each of those score categories.

Five survey questions comprise the Pluralistic Orientation construct:

Rate yourself on each of the following traits as compared with the average person your age:

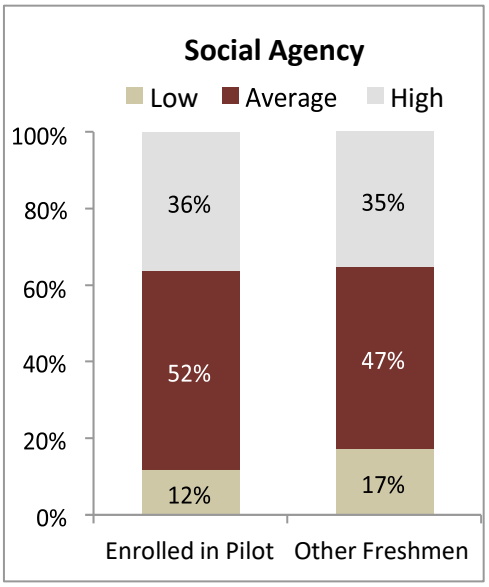
a. Ability to work cooperatively with diverse people
b. Tolerance of others with different beliefs
c. Openness to having my own views challenged
d. Ability to discuss and negotiate controversial issues
e. Ability to see the world from someone else's perspective

Participants in the Core Renewal Pilots, on average, scored statistically significantly *higher* than other Boston College freshmen on four of those measures: *Ability to work cooperatively with diverse people* (p<.01), *Tolerance of others with different beliefs* (p<.05), *Ability to discuss and negotiate controversial issues* (p<.01), *Ability to see the world from someone else's perspective* (p<.01).



SOCIAL AGENCY CONSTRUCT

The Social Agency Construct measures the extent to which students value political and social involvement as a personal goal.



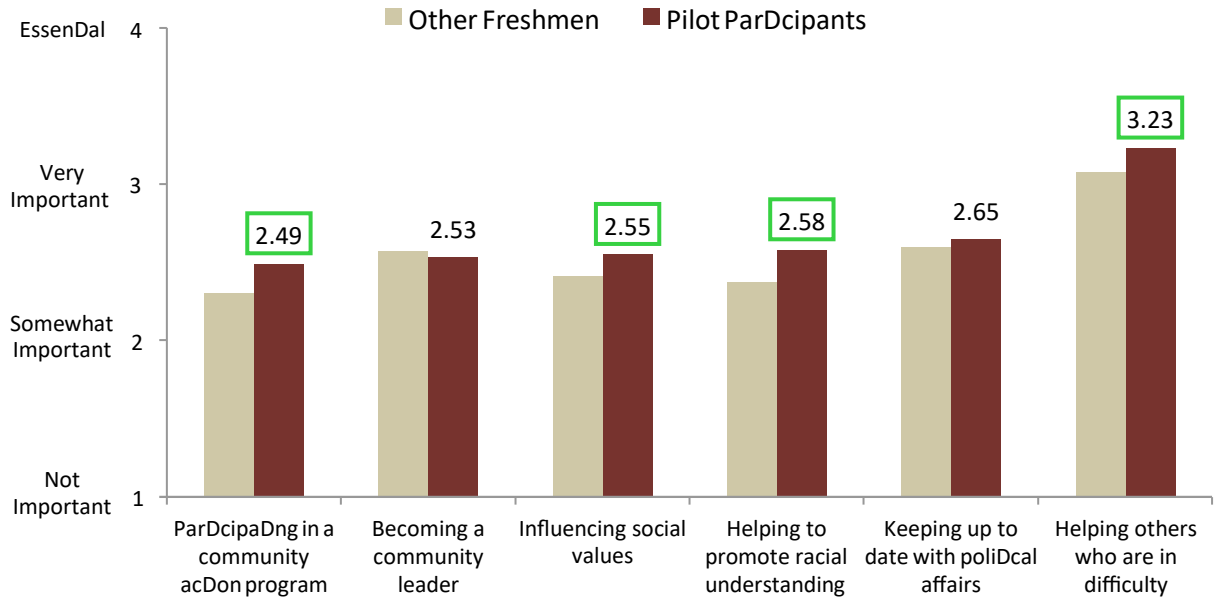
Participants in the Core Renewal Pilots, on average, scored statistically significantly *higher* than other Boston College freshmen on the Social Agency construct (p<.01). For a different perspecitve, the construct scores are categorized into "High", "Average", and "Low" score groups. The graph to the right compares the percentage of freshmen who fall into each of those score categories.

The Social Agency construct is comprised of the following six items:

Indicate the importance to you personally of each of the following…

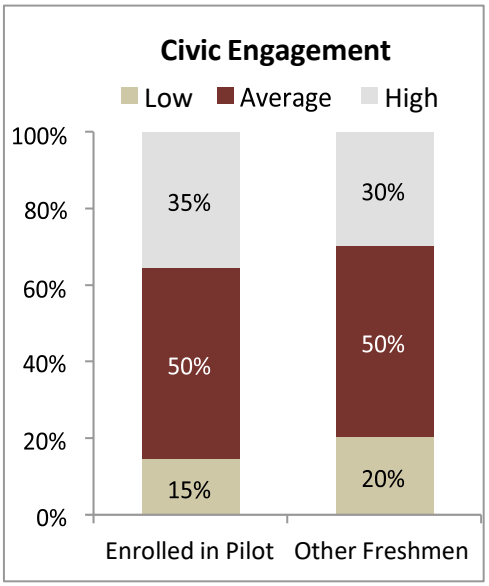
a. Participating in a community action program
b. Helping to promote racial understanding
c. Becoming a community leader
d. Influencing social values
e. Helping others who are in difficulty
f. Keeping up to date with political affairs

Of the six items comprising the Social Agency construct, participants in the Core Renewal Pilots scored statistically significantly *higher* than other Boston College freshmen four measures: *Participating in a community action program* (p<.01), *Helping to promote racial understanding* (p<.01), *Influencing social values* (p<.05), *Helping others who are in difficulty* (p<.01).



CIVIC ENGAGEMENT CONSTRUCT

The Civic Engagement construct measures the extent to which students are motivated and involved in civic, electoral, and political activities.



Participants in the Core Renewal Pilots, on average, scored statistically significantly *higher* than other Boston College freshmen on the Civic Engagement construct (p<.01). For a different perspecitve, the construct scores are categorized into "High", "Average", and "Low" score groups. The graph to the right compares the percentage of freshmen who fall into each of those score categories.

The Civic Engagement construct is comprised of the following seven items:

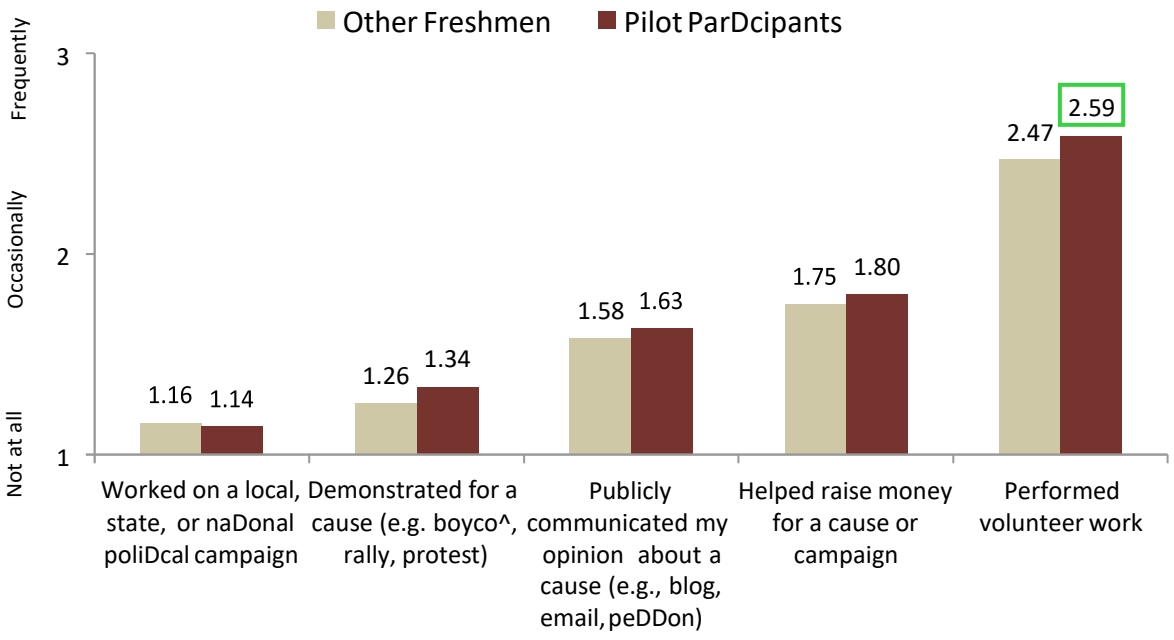
Indicate activities you did in the past year…

a. Demonstrated for a cause (e.g., boycott, rally, protest)
b. Worked on local, state, or national political campaign
c. Publicly communicated my opinion about a cause (e.g., blog, email, petition)
d. Helped raise money for a cause or campaign
e. Performed volunteer work

Indicate the importance to you personally of each of the following…

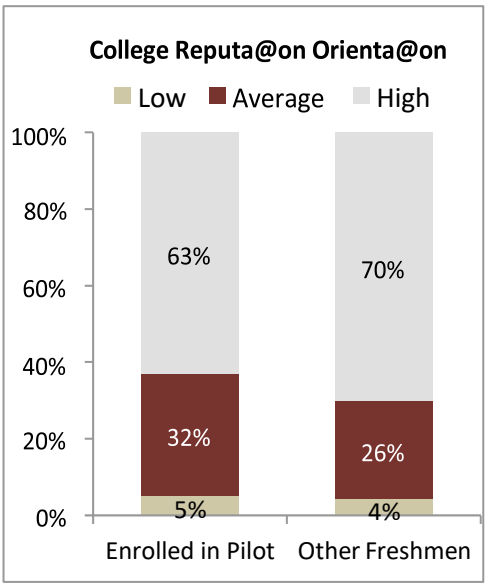
f. Influencing social values
g. Keeping up to date with political affairs

Of the seven items comprising the Civic Engagement construct, participants in the Core Renewal Pilots scored statistically significantly *higher* than other Boston College freshmen on only two measures: *Performed volunteer work* (p<.01), and *Influencing social values* (p<.05).



COLLEGE REPUTATION ORIENTATION CONSTRUCT

The College Reputation Orientation construct measures the degree to which students value academic reputation and future career potential as a reason for choosing their college.



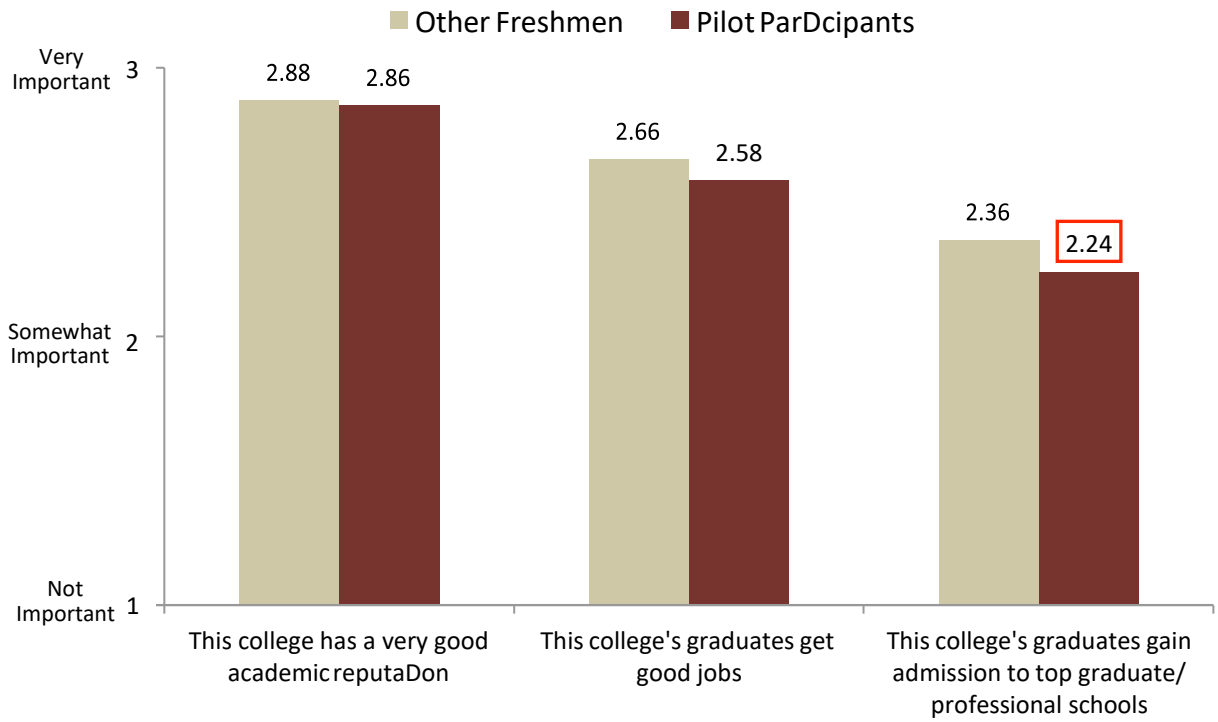
Participants in the Core Renewal Pilots, on average, scored statistically significantly *lower* than other Boston College freshmen on the College Reputation Orientation construct (p<.05). For a different perspecitve, the construct scores are categorized into "High", "Average", and "Low" score groups. The graph to the right compares the percentage of freshmen who fall into each of those score categories.

The College Reputation Orientation construct is comprised of the following three items:

How important was each reason in your decision to come here?

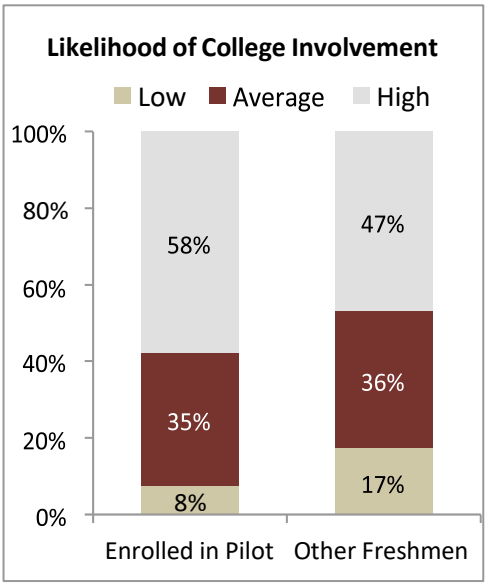
a. This college's graduates get good jobs
b. This college's graduates gain admission to top graduate/professional schools
c. This college has a very good academic reputation

Of the three items comprising the College Reputation Orientation construct, participants in the Core Renewal Pilots scored statistically significantly *lower* than other Boston College freshmen on one measures: *This college's graduates gain admission to top graduate/professional schools* (p<.05).



LIKELIHOOD OF COLLEGE INVOLVEMENT CONSTRUCT

The Likelihood of College Involvement construct is a unified measure of students' expectations about their involvement in college life general.



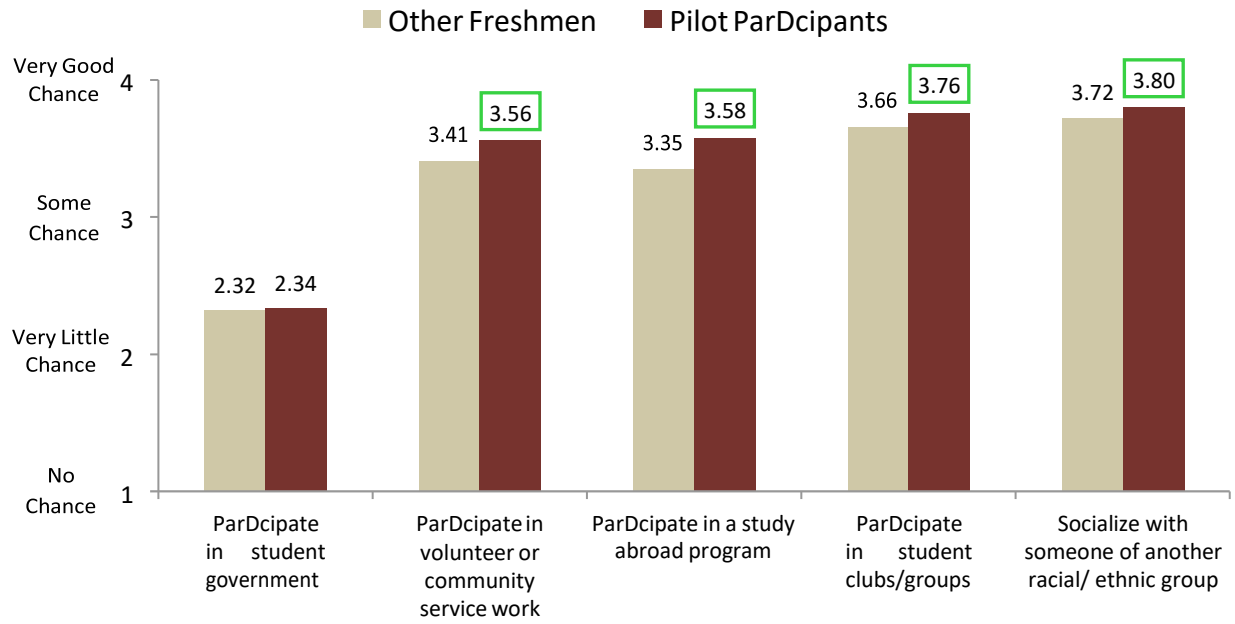
Participants in the Core Renewal Pilots, on average, scored statistically significantly *higher* than other Boston College freshmen on the Likelihood of College Involvement construct (p<.001). For a different perspecitve, the construct scores are categorized into "High", "Average", and "Low" score groups. The graph to the right compares the percentage of freshmen who fall into each of those score categories.

The Likelihood of College Involvement construct is comprised of the following five items:

What is your best guess as to the chances that you will…

a. Participate in student clubs/groups
b. Participate in volunteer or community service work
c. Socialize with someone of another racial/ethnic group
d. Participate in a study abroad program
e. Participate in student government

Of the five items comprising the Likelihood of College Involvement construct, participants in the Core Renewal Pilots scored statistically significantly *higher* than other Boston College freshmen on four measures: *Participate in volunteer or community service work* (p<.01), *Participate in a study abroad program* (p<.001), *Participate in student clubs/groups* (p<.01), *Socialize with someone of another racial/ethnic group* (p<.05).



SUMMARY REPORT
CORE RENEWAL PILOT COURSE SURVEY, FALL 2015

Survey Overview

The purpose of the Core Renewal Pilot Course Survey was to gather feedback from students on their experience in the first semester of the Core Pilot courses. The survey, conducted in December 2015, was sent to all students (203 freshmen) enrolled in Complex Problems and Enduring Questions courses. The survey yielded an overall 84% response rate.

Survey Highlights

- Survey responses were positive on nearly every measure, especially questions related to the main objectives of the courses (**understanding a complex problem** or **exploring an enduring question**).
- Students *strongly agreed* with the statements regarding **learning in two different disciplines**, **knowledge gained** and **reflection**.
- The lowest mean scores were still above *slightly disagree* (a value of 3 on the 6-point response scale).
- One of the lowest scoring survey items related to considering **the role of religious faith** in the course context.
- The only other items with scores below *slightly agree* (a value of 4 on the response scale) were statements where a lower score might be desirable for Core Renewal planning:
    - 'My main reason for taking these courses was to fulfill core requirements' and
    - 'I think I would have benefitted more from these courses if I had taken them later in college.'
- Differences were explored by gender, race/ethnicity, school, course type (Complex Problems vs. Enduring Questions) and course. Results for some survey items did demonstrate statistically significant differences by respondent categories, but no substantive differences were observed.
- One open-ended question was asked: 'What was most valuable to you about your Core Pilot course experience?' Student comments provided qualitative evidence in support of the quantitative survey results. Responses aligned to the following categories: **Format; Faculty; Topic; Impact on Future Plans; Overall Learning.** Comments were overwhelmingly positive and included feedback that may inform future adjustments to core course design. Representative comments are included in the final section of the report.

Background

The 2015-2016 priorities of the University Core Renewal Committee (UCRC) include: managing the first year of Core Renewal Pilot classes and preparing for a second round in 2016-2017; organizing assessment of the Core in preparation for Boston College's 2017 external accreditation visit; and planning for the gradual development of a renewed Core Curriculum.[1]

To these ends, the UCRC, led by Associate Dean Julian Bourg and Professor Mary Crane, collaborated with the Office of Institutional Research, Planning & Assessment (IRPA) to collect early feedback on the first semester of Core Pilot courses. In December 2015, IRPA conducted a survey of all students enrolled in a Core Pilot course. This survey was conducted in parallel with a qualitative study that included focus groups and interviews with faculty, TA's and senior Purposeful Ongoing Discussion (POD) leaders, results of which are provided in a separate report.

Complex Problems and Enduring Questions

Complex Problems courses are six-credit classes that are team-taught.[2] The Core Renewal website describes the course format:

> Two faculty members share the same classroom for the normal three hours of weekly instructional time. In addition, students attend smaller weekly 90-minute lab sessions led by graduate students in which they learn by doing, working in teams to apply knowledge to real-world issues. Finally, weekly one-hour evening sessions provide additional possibilities for shared learning experiences and reflection. In the pilot phase, these classes will be limited to 75–100 first-year students, although in the future they may be larger. Lab session enrollments will be capped at 19 students.[3]

Two Complex Problems courses were taught in fall 2015: "Global Implications of Climate Change" (referred to in this report as "Climate Change") and "Understanding Race, Gender and Violence" (referred to in this report as "Race, Gender and Violence"). Course details are included in Table 1. Three TA's coordinated semester-long lab projects and facilitated discussions for the Race, Gender and Violence course. Students in this class were divided into four lab sections, each focused on a different semester-long project, either working with client organizations or developing a media project. The Climate Change course utilized a different structure: under the direction of three TA's, students completed concurrent lab projects. Junior and senior POD leaders worked in pairs to facilitate weekly Climate Change discussion groups. POD leaders were recruited and supported by the Office of Student Formation and received one credit pass/fail. In all cases, students were randomly assigned to their lab and discussion groups.

1 http://www.bc.edu/sites/core/renewal_committee.html
2 http://www.bc.edu/sites/core/core-renewal.html
3 http://www.bc.edu/sites/core/core-renewal/complex-problems.html

Enduring Questions courses are linked pairs of three-credit classes, each taught by a faculty member from a different department. Classes meet separately but are connected by a common topic. The Core Renewal website describes the course format:

> Two faculty from different departments teach independent classes connected by a common overarching topic. Faculty agree on three enduring questions to examine in their courses, and they collaborate on some shared readings and assignments. The same students take both classes. In addition to the two linked courses, students participate in periodic shared learning experiences and opportunities for reflection throughout the semester. In the pilot phase, these classes will be limited to 19 first-year students, although in the future they may be larger.[4]

Three pairs of Enduring Questions courses were taught in fall 2015: "Truth-Telling in Literature"/"Truth-Telling in History"; "Humans, Nature and Creativity"/ "Inquiring About Humans and Nature"; and "Reading the Body"/ "The Body in Sickness and Health". Each course had four reflection sessions over the course of the semester. Some Enduring Questions faculty co-facilitated these reflection sessions, and others alternated the sessions they facilitated.

Table 1: Fall 2015 Core Renewal Pilot Courses

Core Category	Course Name	Course Number	Instructors
Complex Problems	Global Implications of Climate Change	SOCY150101/ EESC150101	Brian Gareau Tara Pisani Gareau
Complex Problems	Understanding Race, Gender and Violence	HIST150301/ SOCY150301	Marilynn Johnson Shawn McGuffey
Enduring Questions	Truth-Telling in Literature Truth-Telling in History	ENGL170101 HIST170101	Allison Adair Sylvia Sellers-Garcia
Enduring Questions	Humans, Nature and Creativity Inquiring About Humans and Nature	ENGL170301 PHIL 170301	Min Song Holly Vande Wall
Enduring Questions	Reading the Body The Body in Sickness and Health	ENGL170201 SOCY170201	Laura Tanner Jane Ashley

[4] http://www.bc.edu/sites/core/core-renewal/enduring-questions.html

Administration

The Core Renewal Pilot Course Survey was conducted in December 2015. Students in Complex Problems courses and Enduring Questions courses were asked primarily the same questions, with some variations based on course type (please see Appendix for survey instruments). The survey was sent to 204 students (203 unique students; one student, enrolled in both Complex Problems and Enduring Questions courses, was asked to take both versions of the survey). The survey yielded an overall 84% response rate (85% of 128 Complex Problems students and 81% of 53 Enduring Questions students).

The survey respondents were representative of the surveyed population in terms of gender, race/ethnicity and college. Demographic characteristics of students enrolled in the Core Pilot courses were moderately different than those of the overall freshman class, as presented in Table 2. For example, women, AHANA students, and Arts and Sciences students were slightly overrepresented, and Management students were slightly underrepresented, in Core Pilot course enrollments. Some factors influencing enrollment may include class topics and school- or major-specific course requirements.

Table 2: Demographics

		Survey Respondents N=171	**Enrolled in Core Pilot Course Fall 2015** N=204	**Class of 2019** N=2333
Gender				
Female		67.8%	65.0%	51.2%
Male		32.2%	35.0%	48.8%
Race/Ethnicity				
U.S. Citizens/ permanent residents	**White**	65.6%	66.3%	70.4%
	AHANA	34.4%	33.7%	29.6%
Race/Ethnicity Unknown		2.9%	3.0%	4.1%
International		3.5%	3.4%	7.0%
"White" and "AHANA" values are based on U.S. Citizens/permanent residents who reported their race/ethnicity. "Unknown" and "International" values are based on the entire defined set.				
School				
Arts and Sciences		74.3%	74.9%	67.0%
Education		7.0%	6.4%	5.4%
Management		9.4%	8.9%	23.5%
Nursing		9.4%	9.9%	4.2%

Results: Overall

Most survey items asked for level of agreement on a 6 point scale. Mean results are displayed for each item, arranged from highest to lowest.

Table 3: Overall Survey Results (mean scores sorted by level of agreement, high to low)

Scale: ← 1 Strongly disagree | 2 Disagree | 3 Slightly disagree | 4 Slightly agree | 5 Agree | 6 Strongly agree →

Survey Questions	Mean
Results between "Agree" and "Strongly agree"	
[EQ ONLY] I explored enduring questions that are central to understanding human life.	5.74
[EQ ONLY] The questions discussed were of interest to me.	5.69
[CP ONLY] I gained a greater understanding of a complex contemporary problem.	5.48
I gained knowledge that will be useful to me in the future.	5.45
I learned how these two disciplines relate to each other, and differ in their approaches.	5.41
I am able to explain the significance… [of a CP/EQ]...to someone who has not taken these courses.	5.38
I would recommend that other first-year students take [an EQ pair of courses] OR [a CP course].	5.30
I was challenged to think in new ways.	5.30
This course was intellectually challenging.	5.25
I learned the methods that two different academic disciplines use…	5.24
I was inspired to want to make a difference in the world.	5.19
I learned how to reflect on the meaning and significance of what I experience.	5.19
I began to understand what … knowledge I will need to pursue [solutions to CPs…] OR [EQs].	5.18
I was encouraged to examine my values and beliefs.	5.16
I gained analytical skills [CP] / I practiced and improved my reading, writing, analytical skills [EQ].	5.14
Results between "Slightly agree" and "Agree"	
I was encouraged to think about what I want to do with my life.	4.91
My main reason for taking these courses was to gain an understanding of the [CPs] OR [EQs].	4.90
Of all the courses I took this semester, I was most engaged by one, or both, of these courses.	4.82
I was influenced to take more courses in one of these two fields.	4.81
[CP ONLY] I was presented with a balanced view of the problem from multiple perspectives.	4.75
The evening reflection meetings were a valuable part of the course.	4.51
[CP ONLY] The labs required me to engage in active learning.	4.33
I was helped to move toward making a decision about a major in one of these fields.	4.32
I was helped to think about a future career path.	4.23
[CP ONLY] The labs were a valuable part of the course.	4.13
Results between "Slightly disagree" and "Slightly agree"	
I considered the role of religious faith in approaching [EQs] OR contemporary problems [CPs].	3.78
My main reason for taking these courses was to fulfill core requirements.	3.48
I think I would have benefited more from these courses if I had taken them later in college.	3.02

Note:
[CP] indicates an item unique to the Complex Problems survey or the complex problems-variation of an item that is shared with the Enduring Questions survey. [EQ] indicates an item unique to the Enduring Questions survey or the enduring questions-variation of an item that is shared with the Complex Problems survey.

The Office of Marketing Communications collaborated with the Core Renewal Committee in promoting the Core Pilot courses using a variety of channels. Respondents were asked about what influenced them to enroll in a Core Pilot course. Many responded to the most content-rich channels, including the brochure and website with course descriptions, as presented in Table 4.

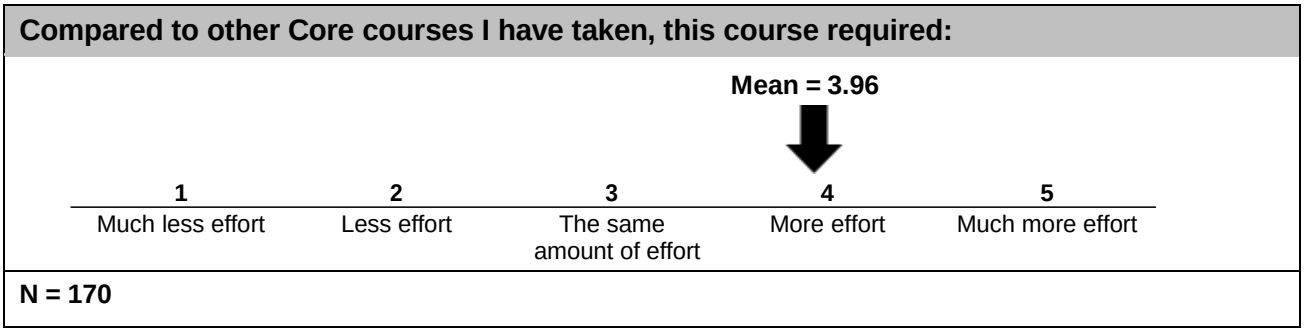
Table 4: Overall Survey Results – Influences

I was influenced to enroll in a Core Pilot course by:	% Respondents who selected each option
Brochure with courses descriptions	77.8%
Website with course descriptions and general information about Core Pilot courses	38.6%
Advising	29.8%
Video of faculty discussing their courses	25.1%
Orientation Leader	22.8%
Marketing flyer at Admitted Eagle Day	19.3%
My parents	18.7%
Admission	17.5%
Other students	8.2%
Other (included: myself; international assistant; Options Through Education program; siblings; intriguing course name; no other courses available)	5.8%
N = 171	

Note: Percentages do not add to 100% because respondents were asked to select "all that apply."

The Core Pilot courses are structured differently from most other core courses, in that they include lab and discussion section requirements and cross-disciplinary work. The Core Renewal Committee was interested in determining the level of effort required by these courses in their pilot year. The overall mean response to this question is shown in Figure 1.

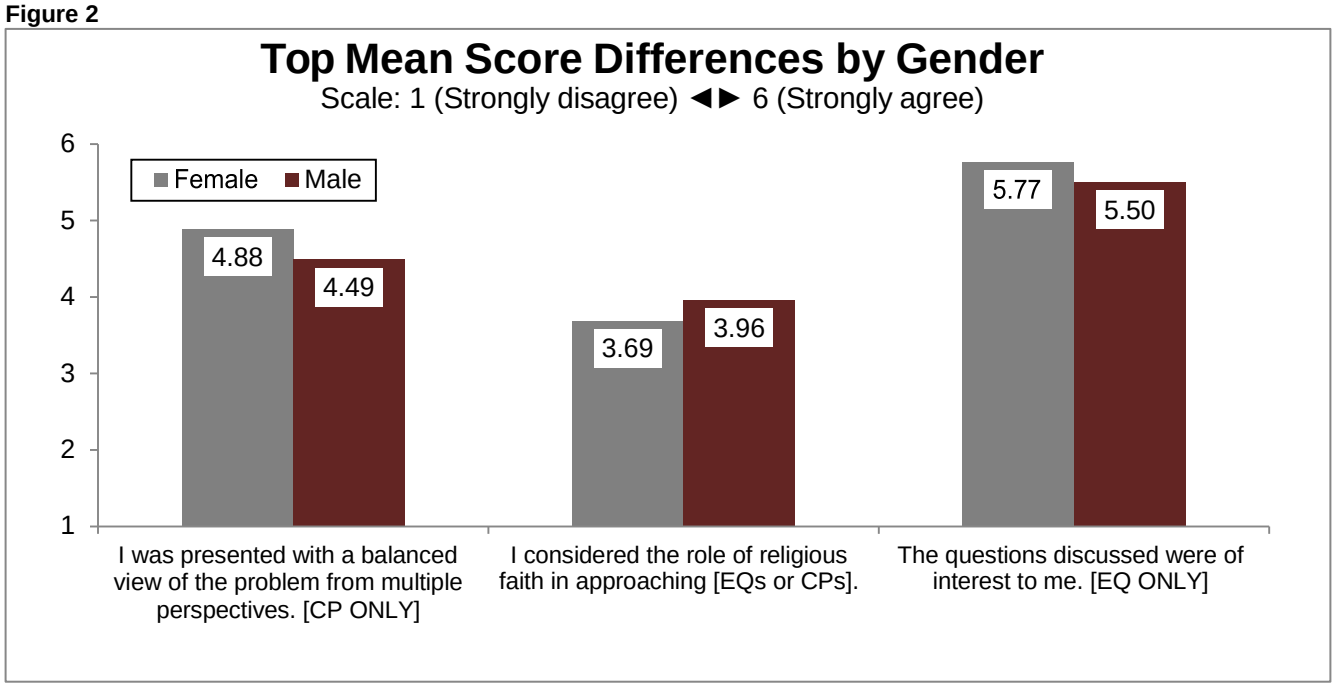
Figure 1: Overall Survey Results – Workload



Results by Gender

There were few differences by gender. Figure 2 displays results where the difference between mean scores of female and male respondents was greater than 0.25.

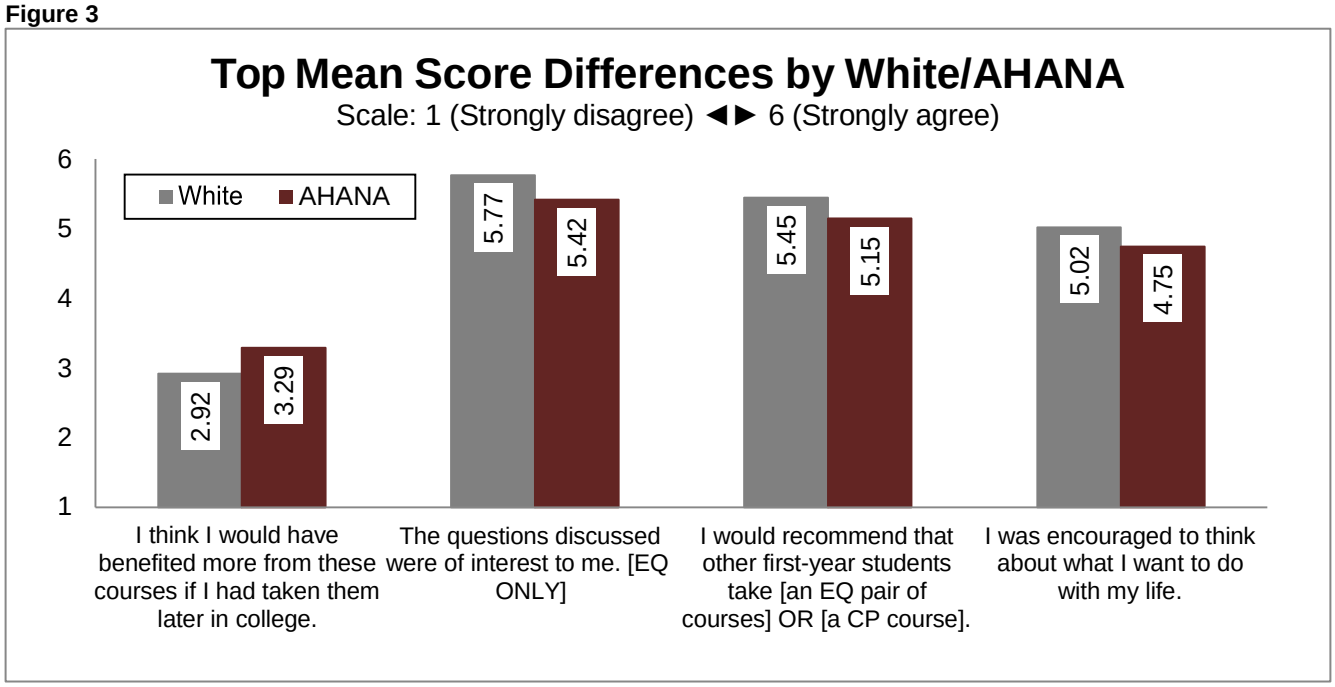
Figure 2



Results by Race/Ethnicity

There were few differences by race/ethnicity. Figure 3 presents results where the difference between mean scores of White and AHANA respondents was greater than 0.25. International students and students who did not report their race/ethnicity are excluded.

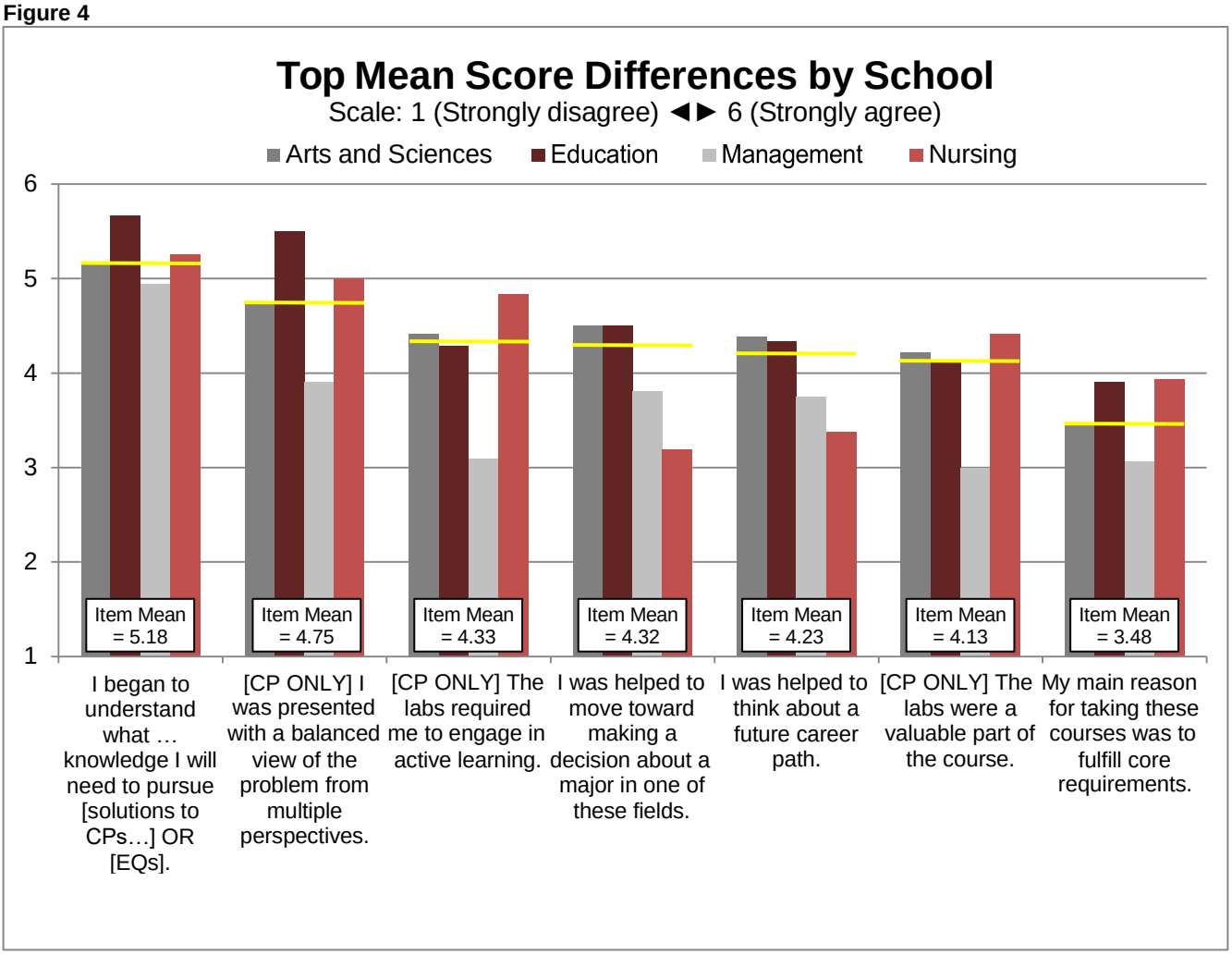
Figure 3



Results by School

The mean scores from students in the Carroll School of Management tended to be lower than the overall mean, and mean scores from the students in the Lynch School of Education and the Connell School of Nursing tended to be higher than the overall mean. The exceptions to this were the Nursing students' responses on items regarding majors and career paths, likely because the Nursing students have more clarity on these topics already, and may be less apt to change their focus as a result of their core coursework. Survey items with the greatest differences by school are displayed in Figure 4.

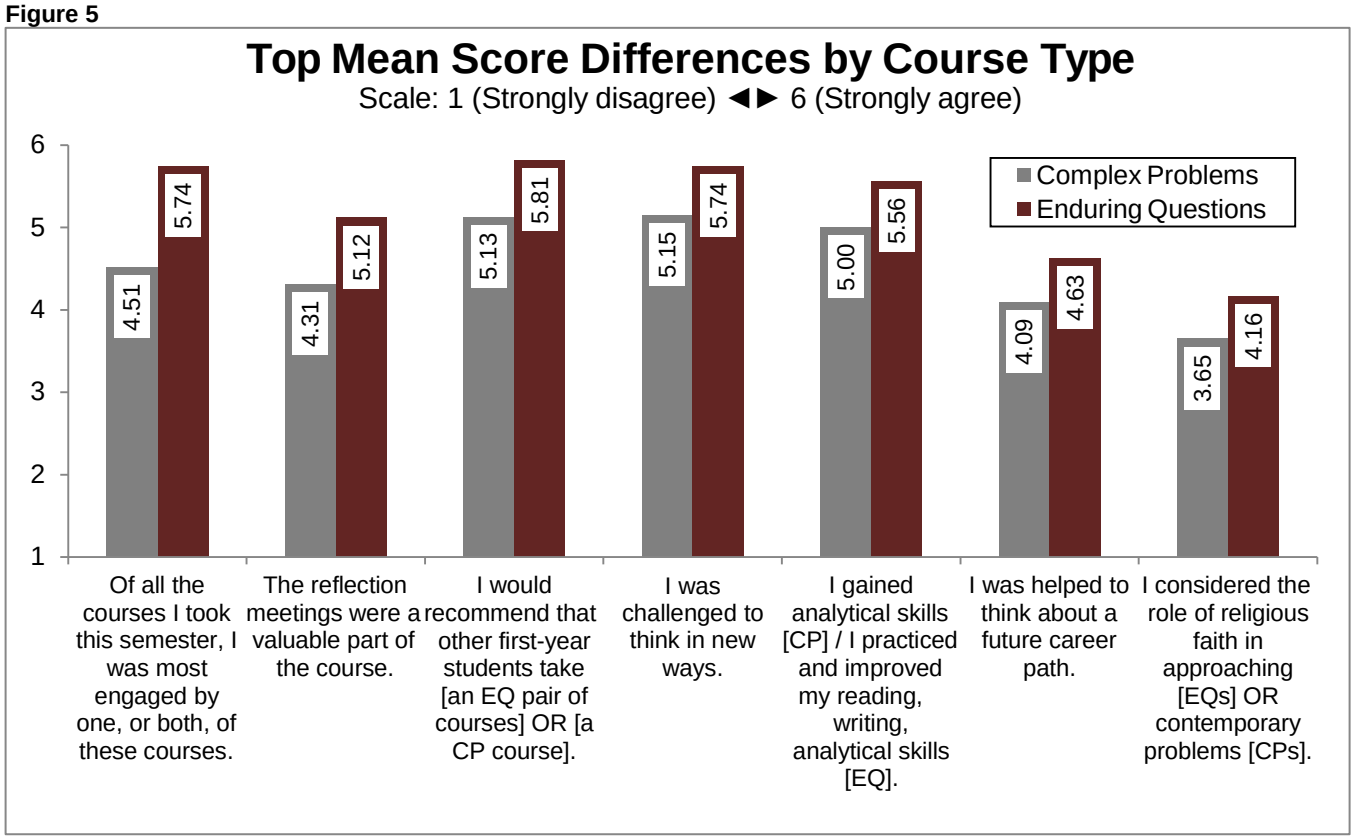
Figure 4



Results by Course Type

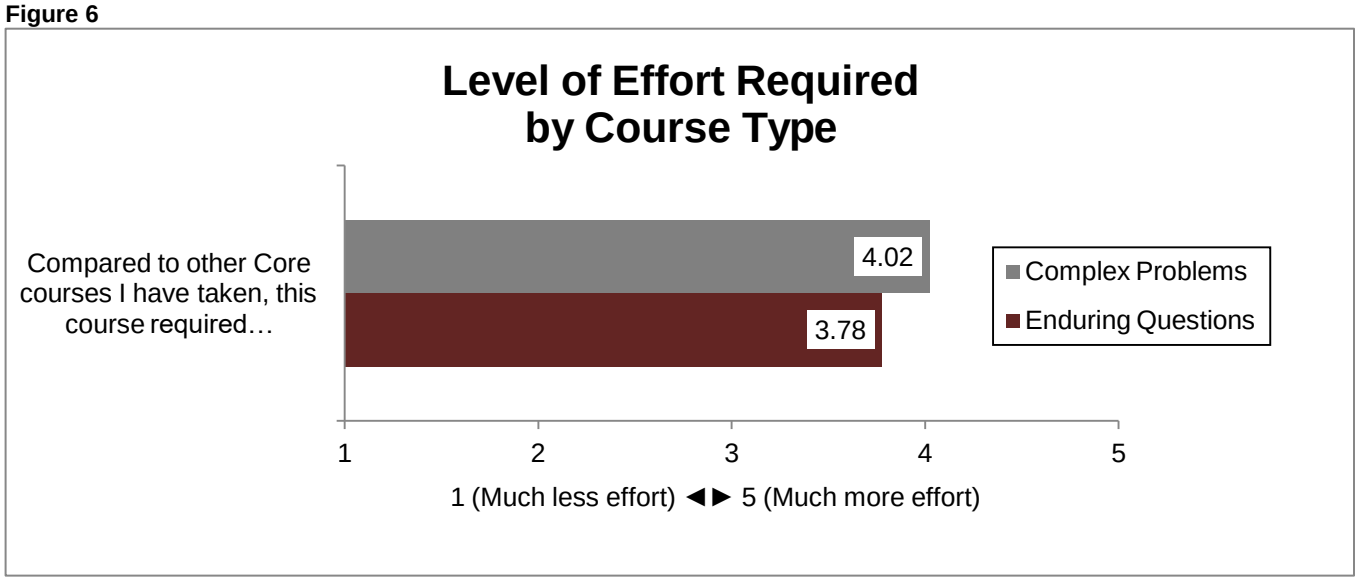
Mean scores based on Enduring Questions respondent ratings were consistently higher than mean scores based on Complex Problems respondent ratings. Figure 5 displays results where the difference between mean scores was greater than 0.50.

Figure 5



The only survey item yielding a substantively higher mean score (a difference of 0.24) from Complex Problems respondent ratings than Enduring Questions respondent ratings was the "level of effort" item.

Figure 6



CORE RENEWAL PILOT COURSE SURVEY REPORT
SPRING 2016

Survey Overview

The purpose of the Core Renewal Pilot Course Survey was to gather feedback from students on their experience in the first year of the Core Pilot courses. The survey, conducted in April/May 2016, was sent to all students (122 freshmen and one sophomore) enrolled in the Complex Problems and Enduring Questions pilot courses. The survey yielded an overall 68.3% response rate.

Survey Highlights

- Similar to fall survey results, spring survey responses were positive on nearly every measure, especially questions related to the main objectives of the courses (**understanding a complex problem** or **exploring an enduring question**).

- The lowest-scoring item was a statement where disagreement might be desirable for Core Renewal planning:
  - *I think I would have benefitted more from these courses if I had taken them later in college.* (overall mean = 3.25, where 3 = *slightly disagree* on the 6-point response scale).

- The lowest mean scores were still above *slightly disagree* (a value of 3 on the 6-point response scale).

- Differences were explored by gender, race/ethnicity, school, course type (Complex Problems vs. Enduring Questions) and course. Results for some survey items did demonstrate statistically significant differences by respondent categories, particularly by course; students in the one Complex Problems course this semester demonstrated less agreement than students in the Enduring Questions courses.

- Students were asked to describe their Core Pilot course experience in response to three open-ended questions:
  - What was most valuable?
  - What was least valuable?
  - Is there anything you would recommend changing about this Core Pilot course?

  Student comments provided qualitative evidence in support of the quantitative survey results. Responses highlighted themes including: Format; Content; Workload and Building Connections. Representative comments are included in the final section of the report.

Background

The 2015-2016 priorities of the University Core Renewal Committee (UCRC) include: managing the first year of Core Renewal Pilot classes and preparing for a second round in 2016-2017; organizing assessment of the Core in preparation for Boston College's 2017 external accreditation visit; and planning for the gradual development of a renewed Core Curriculum.[1]

To these ends, the UCRC, led by Associate Dean Julian Bourg and Professor Mary Crane, collaborated with the Office of Institutional Research, Planning & Assessment (IRPA) to collect early feedback on the first year of Core Pilot courses. In December 2015, IRPA conducted a survey of all students enrolled in a Core Pilot course. A second phase of this survey was conducted in the April/May 2016. This survey of spring semester Core Pilot students was conducted in parallel with a qualitative study that included a faculty focus group and interviews with faculty and TA's, results of which are provided separately. Survey results from the spring 2016 student survey are presented in this report.

Complex Problems and Enduring Questions

Complex Problems courses are six-credit classes that are team-taught.[2] The Core Renewal website describes the course format:

> Two faculty members share the same classroom for the normal three hours of weekly instructional time. In addition, students attend smaller weekly 90-minute lab sessions led by graduate students in which they learn by doing, working in teams to apply knowledge to real-world issues. Finally, weekly one-hour evening sessions provide additional possibilities for shared learning experiences and reflection. In the pilot phase, these classes will be limited to 75–100 first-year students, although in the future they may be larger. Lab session enrollments will be capped at 19 students.[3]

One Complex Problems course was taught in spring 2016: "Genocide and Crimes Against Humanity" (referred to in this report as "Genocide"). Course details are presented in Table 1 and in Appendix B. Faculty and two TA's facilitated class discussions in reflection sessions and the TA's coordinated semester-long lab projects. Students were divided into four lab sections. Within each lab, students were further divided into two (randomly assigned) groups and selected a topic from the five case studies covered in the course for a semester-long project. Each group created a website using MediaChron and presented their results to the entire class in a 10-15 minute presentation at the end of the semester.

Enduring Questions courses are linked pairs of three-credit classes, each taught by a faculty member from a different department. Classes meet separately but are connected by a common topic. The Core Renewal website describes the course format:

> Two faculty from different departments teach independent classes connected by a common overarching topic. Faculty agree on three enduring questions to examine in their courses, and they collaborate on some shared readings and assignments. The same students take both classes. In addition to the two linked courses, students participate in periodic shared learning

1 http://www.bc.edu/sites/core/renewal_committee.html
2 http://www.bc.edu/sites/core/core-renewal.html
3 http://www.bc.edu/sites/core/core-renewal/complex-problems.html

experiences and opportunities for reflection throughout the semester. In the pilot phase, these classes will be limited to 19 first-year students, although in the future they may be larger.[4]

Three pairs of Enduring Questions courses were taught in spring 2016: "Epidemics, Disease and Humanity"/"Devising Theatre: Disease as Metaphor" ("Disease"); "Power, Justice, War: The Ancients"/ "Power, Justice, War: The Moderns" ("Power"); and "Spiritual Exercises: Engagement, Empathy, Ethics"/ "Aesthetic Exercises: Engagement, Empathy, Ethics" ("Exercises"). Each course had four reflection sessions over the course of the semester. Enduring Questions faculty pairs structured these reflection sessions in different ways. Course details are presented in Table 1 and in Appendix B.

Table 1: Spring 2016 Core Renewal Pilot Courses

Core Category	Course Name	Course Number	Instructors
Complex Problems	Genocide and Crimes Against Humanity	HIST1501/ ENGL1501	Maxim Shrayer Devin Pendas
Enduring Questions	Epidemics, Disease and Humanity	BIOL1701	Kathleen Dunn
	Devising Theatre: Disease as Metaphor	THTR1701	Scott Cummings
Enduring Questions	Power, Justice, War: The Ancients	POLI1701	Robert Bartlett
	Power, Justice, War: The Moderns	PHIL1701	Aspen Brinton
Enduring Questions	Spiritual Exercises: Engagement, Empathy, Ethics	THEO1701	Brian Robinette
	Aesthetic Exercises: Engagement, Empathy, Ethics	MUSA1701	Daniel Callahan

[4] http://www.bc.edu/sites/core/core-renewal/enduring-questions.html

Administration

The second administration of the Core Renewal Pilot Course Survey was conducted in April/May 2016. Students in the Complex Problems course and Enduring Questions courses were asked primarily the same questions, with some variations based on course type (please see Appendix A for survey instruments). The survey was sent to 123 students and yielded an overall 68.3% response rate (64.5% for Complex Problems students and 74.5% for Enduring Questions students).

Respondents were representative of the surveyed population in terms of gender and school; AHANA students were slightly underrepresented. Demographic characteristics of students enrolled in the Core Pilot courses were moderately different than those of the overall freshman class, as presented in Table 2. For example, women, AHANA students, and Arts and Sciences students were overrepresented and Management students were underrepresented in Core Pilot course enrollments. School- or major-specific course requirements may have influenced enrollment.

Table 2: Demographics

		Survey Respondents N=84	Enrolled in Core Pilot Course Spring 2016 N=123	Class of 2019 (spring enrollment) N=2314
Gender				
Female		65.5%	63.4%	51.4%
Male		34.5%	36.6%	48.6%
Race/Ethnicity				
U.S. Citizens/ permanent residents	**White**	73.2%	63.2%	70.4%
	AHANA	26.3%	36.8%	29.6%
Race/Ethnicity Unknown		1.2%	1.6%	4.0%
International		1.2%	3.3%	7.0%
"White" and "AHANA" values are based on U.S. Citizens/permanent residents who reported their race/ethnicity. "Unknown" and "International" values are based on the entire defined set.				
School				
Arts and Sciences		73.8%	76.4%	67.0%
Education		6.0%	5.7%	5.4%
Management		14.3%	12.2%	23.6%
Nursing		6.0%	5.7%	4.1%

Results: Overall

Most survey items asked for level of agreement on a 6-point scale. Mean results are displayed for each item, arranged from highest to lowest.

Table 3: Overall Survey Results (mean scores sorted by level of agreement, high to low)

Scale: ← 1 Strongly disagree | 2 Disagree | 3 Slightly disagree | 4 Slightly agree | 5 Agree | 6 Strongly agree →

Survey Items	Mean
Results between "Agree" and "Strongly agree"	
[EQ ONLY] The questions discussed were of interest to me.	5.60
[EQ ONLY] I explored enduring questions that are central to understanding human life.	5.57
[CP ONLY] I gained a greater understanding of a complex contemporary problem.	5.45
This course was intellectually challenging.	5.41
I would recommend that other first-year students take [an EQ pair of courses] OR [a CP course].	5.35
I was challenged to think in new ways.	5.32
I learned how these two disciplines relate to each other, and differ in their approaches.	5.24
I gained analytical skills [CP] / I practiced and improved my reading, writing, analytical skills [EQ].	5.20
I was encouraged to examine my values and beliefs.	5.16
[CP ONLY] I was presented with a balanced view of the problem from multiple perspectives.	5.14
I am able to explain the significance… [of a CP/EQ]...to someone who has not taken these courses.	5.13
I began to understand what … knowledge I will need to pursue [solutions to CPs…] OR [EQs].	5.08
I gained knowledge that will be useful to me in the future.	5.06
I learned how to reflect on the meaning and significance of what I experience.	5.04
Of all the courses I took this semester, I was most engaged by one, or both, of these courses.	5.01
I learned the methods that two different academic disciplines use…	5.00
Results between "Slightly agree" and "Agree"	
[CP ONLY] The labs required me to engage in active learning.	4.94
I was inspired to want to make a difference in the world.	4.92
[CP ONLY] The labs were a valuable part of the course.	4.79
My main reason for taking these courses was to gain an understanding of the [CPs] OR [EQs].	4.51
I was encouraged to think about what I want to do with my life.	4.48
I was influenced to take more courses in one of these two fields.	4.48
The evening reflection meetings were a valuable part of the course.	4.39
I considered the role of religious faith in approaching [EQs] OR contemporary problems [CPs].	4.06
Results between "Slightly disagree" and "Slightly agree"	
I was helped to move toward making a decision about a major in one of these fields.	3.95
My main reason for taking these courses was to fulfill core requirements.	3.95
I was helped to think about a future career path.	3.88
I think I would have benefited more from these courses if I had taken them later in college.	3.25

Note:
[CP] indicates an item unique to the Complex Problems survey or the complex problems-variation of an item that is shared with the Enduring Questions survey. [EQ] indicates an item unique to the Enduring Questions survey or the enduring questions-variation of an item that is shared with the Complex Problems survey.

The Office of Marketing Communications collaborated with the Core Renewal Committee in promoting the Core Pilot courses using a variety of channels. Respondents were asked about what influenced them to enroll in a Core Pilot course. Many responded to the most content-rich channels, including the brochure and website with course descriptions, as presented in Table 4. Admission and Orientation-related channels were less popular in the spring than in the fall.

Table 4: Overall Survey Results – Influences

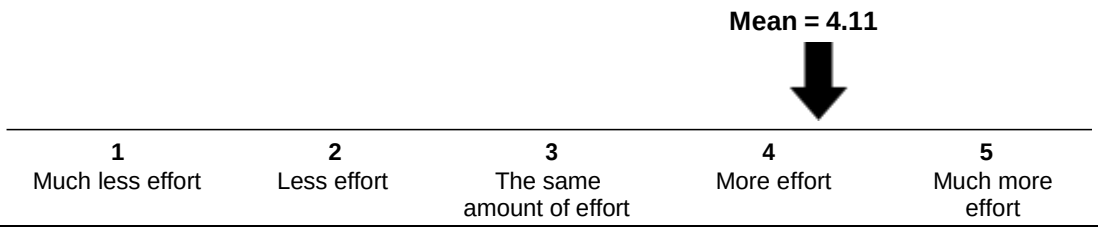
I was influenced to enroll in a Core Pilot course by:	% Respondents who selected each option
Brochure with courses descriptions	53.6%
Website with course descriptions and general information about Core Pilot courses	34.5%
Advising	22.6%
Other students	22.6%
Video of faculty discussing their courses	22.6%
Marketing flyer at Admitted Eagle Day	16.7%
Admission	13.1%
My parents	11.9%
Other (included: myself; high school teacher; web or Agora search; topical interest; previous experience with faculty/TA; and 'didn't know it was a pilot course')	9.5%
Orientation Leader	7.1%
N = 81	

Note: Percentages do not add to 100% because respondents were asked to select "all that apply."

The Core Renewal Pilot courses are structured differently from most other Core courses, in that they include lab and discussion section requirements and cross-disciplinary work. The Core Renewal Committee was interested in determining the level of effort required by these courses in their pilot year. The overall mean response to this question is shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Overall Survey Results – Workload

Compared to other Core courses I have taken, this course required:

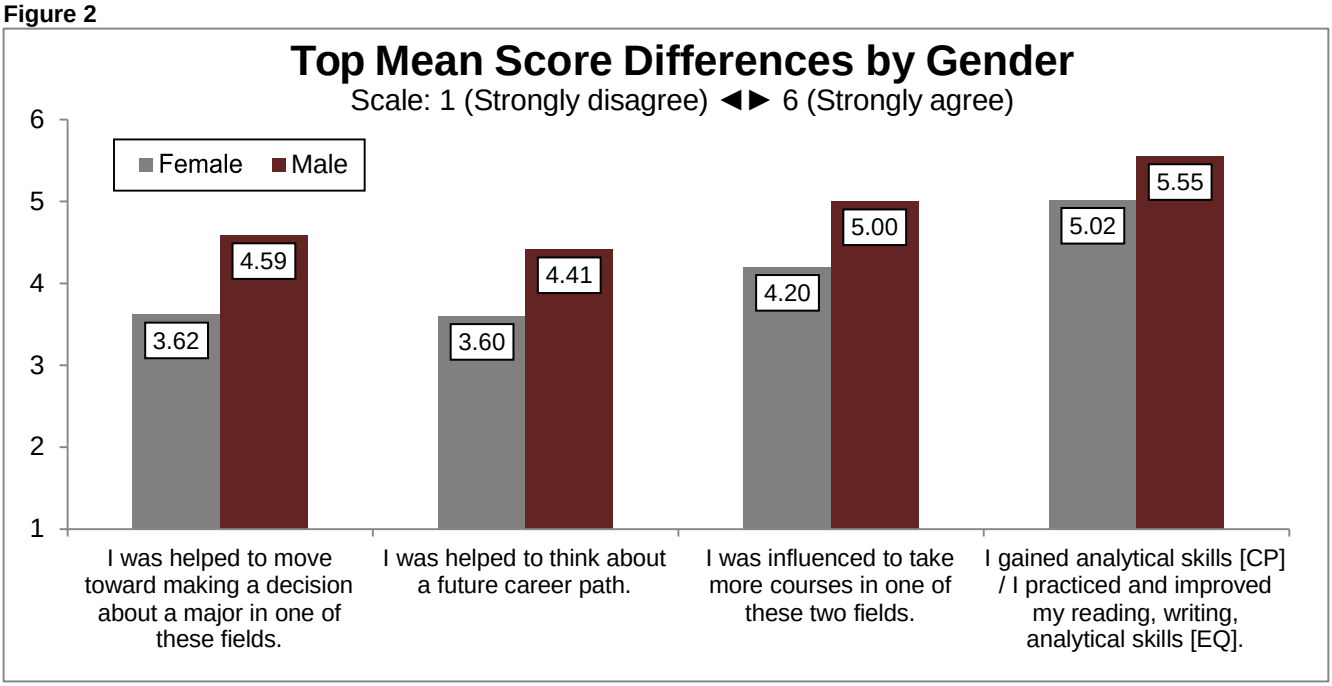


N = 82

Results by Gender

There were few differences by gender, though generally female respondents demonstrated less agreement than male respondents. Figure 2 displays statistically significant results, from greatest difference to least, where the difference between mean scores of female and male respondents was greater than 0.50.

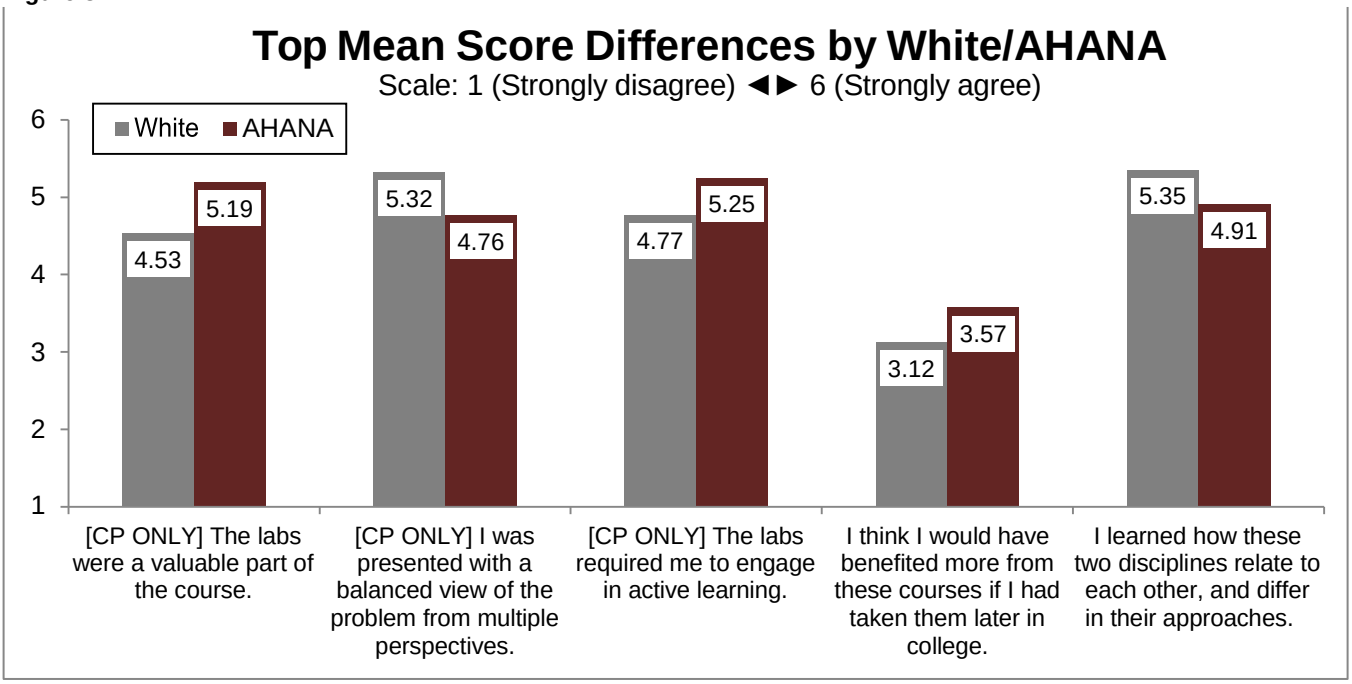
Figure 2



Results by Race/Ethnicity

No statistically significant differences emerged by race/ethnicity. Figure 3 presents results, from greatest difference to least, where the difference between mean scores from White and AHANA respondents was greater than 0.40. International students and students who did not report their race/ethnicity are excluded.

Figure 3



Results by School

Mean scores based on Carroll School of Management respondent ratings tended to be lower than the overall means, and mean scores based on Lynch School of Education and Morrissey College of Arts and Sciences respondent ratings tended be higher than the overall means. Survey items with the greatest differences by school are displayed in Figures 4 and 5.

Figure 4

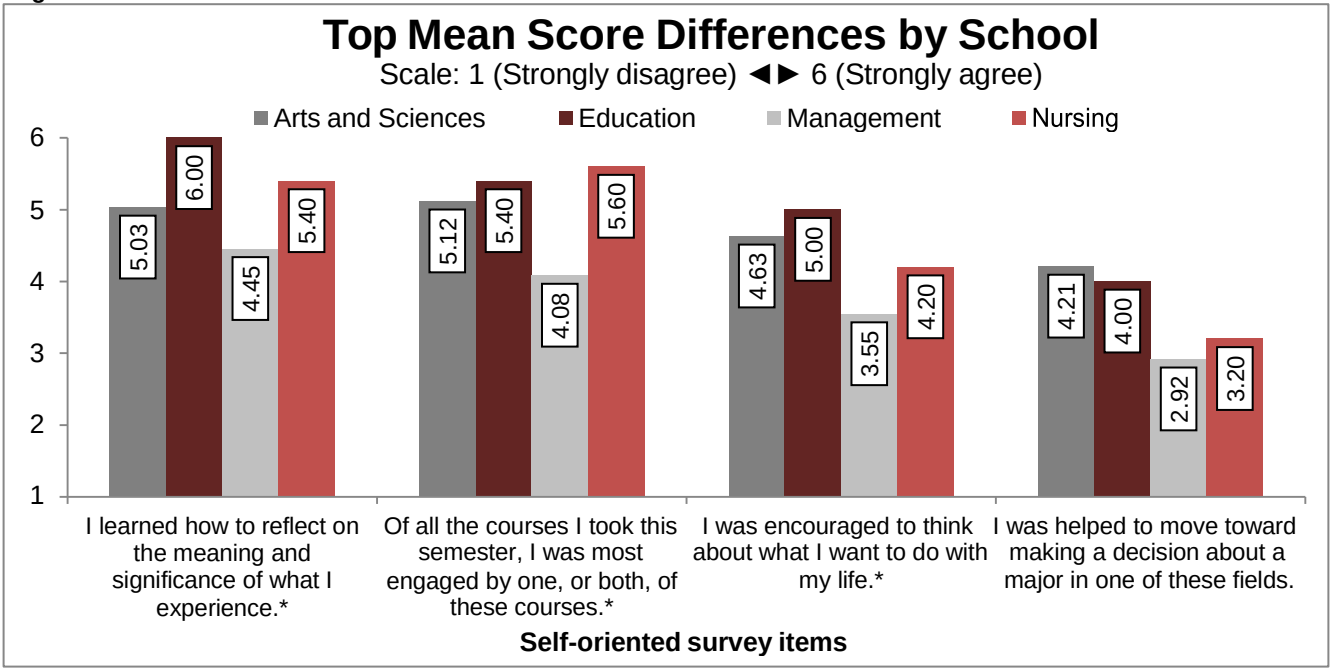
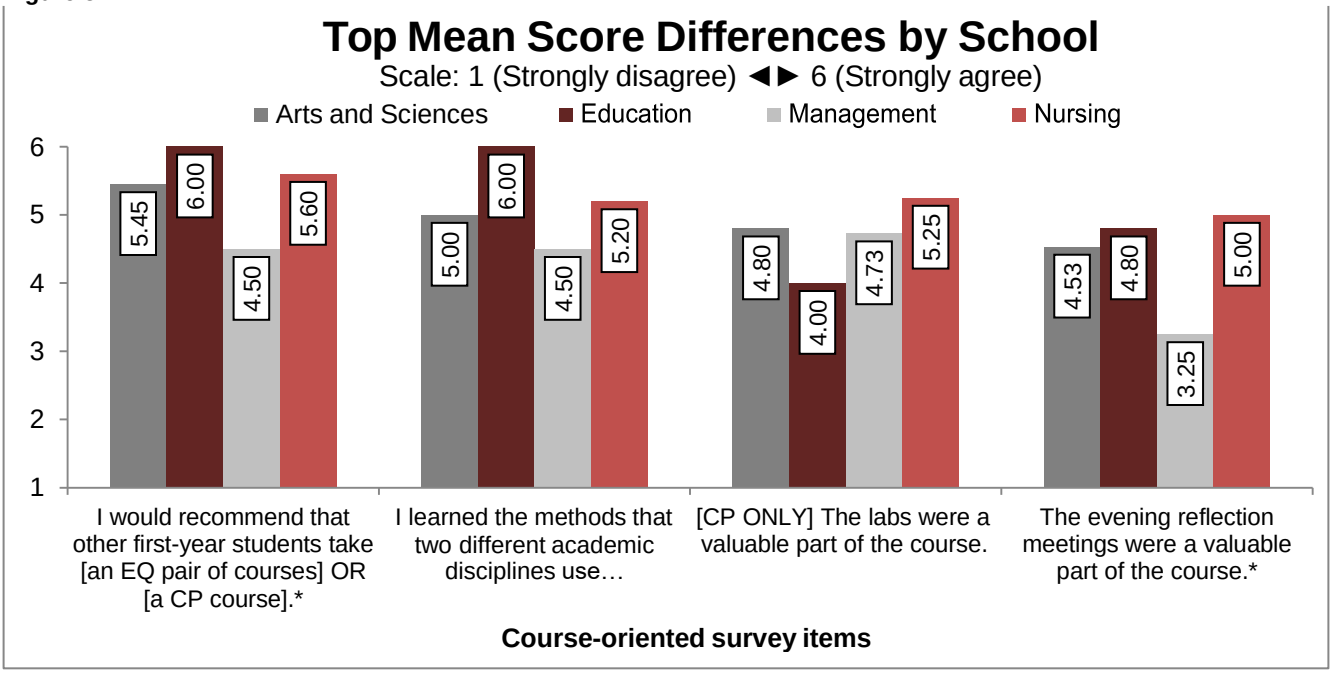


Figure 5



* Indicates a statistically significant difference.

Results by Course Type

Mean scores based on Enduring Questions respondent ratings were consistently higher than mean scores based on Complex Problems respondent ratings.

Figures 6-8 display results, from greatest difference to least, for items where the difference between mean scores was greater than 0.50.

The only items on the 6-point agreement scale which yielded a higher mean from Complex Problems respondents than from Enduring Questions respondents were:

- *My main reason for taking these courses was to fulfill core requirements.*
  (CP = 4.17, EQ = 3.66 Δ = 0.51) (Figure 7)
- *I am able to explain the significance… [of a complex problem /enduring question]...to someone who has not taken these courses.*
  (CP = 5.28, EQ = 4.94, Δ = 0.33)
- *I think I would have benefited more from these courses if I had taken them later in college.*
  (CP = 3.34, EQ = 3.12, Δ = 0.22)

Figure 6

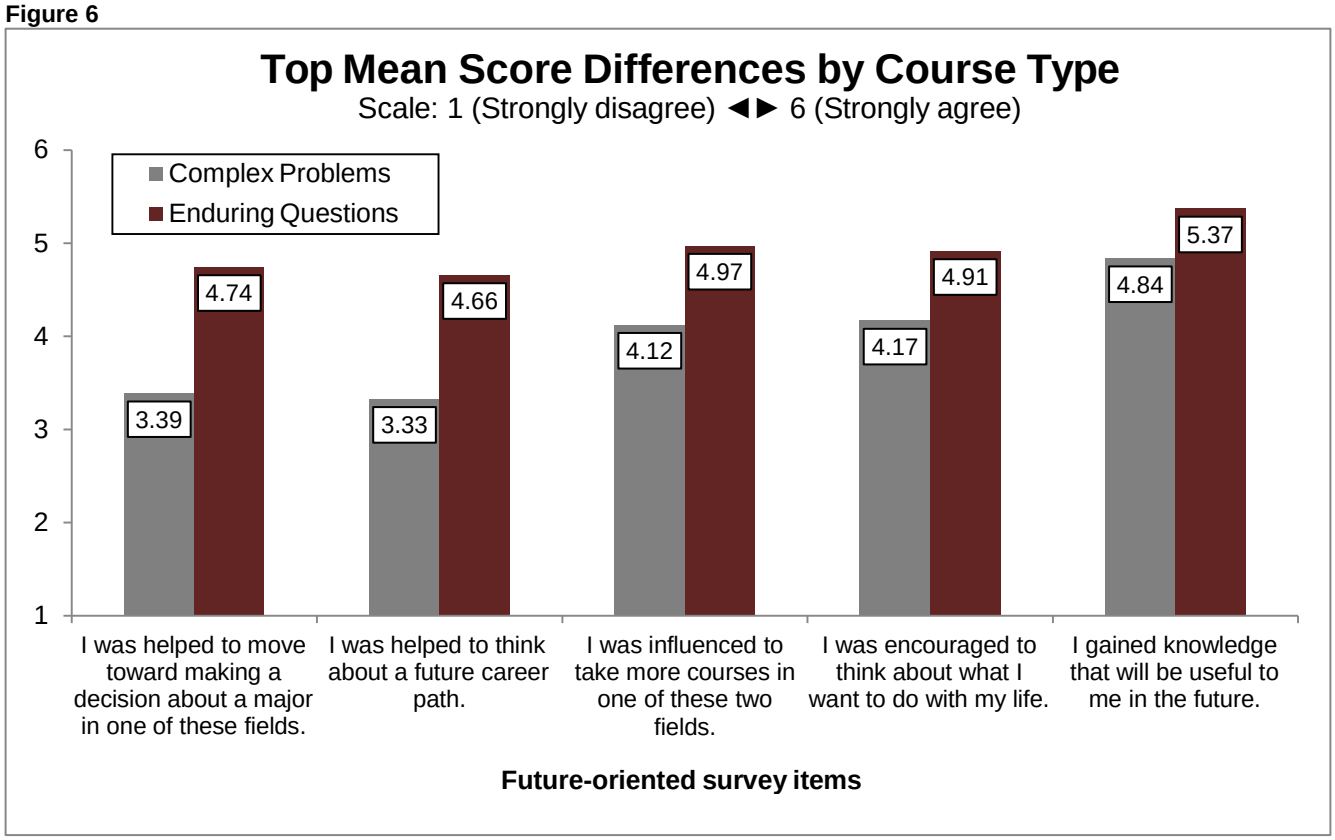


Figure 7

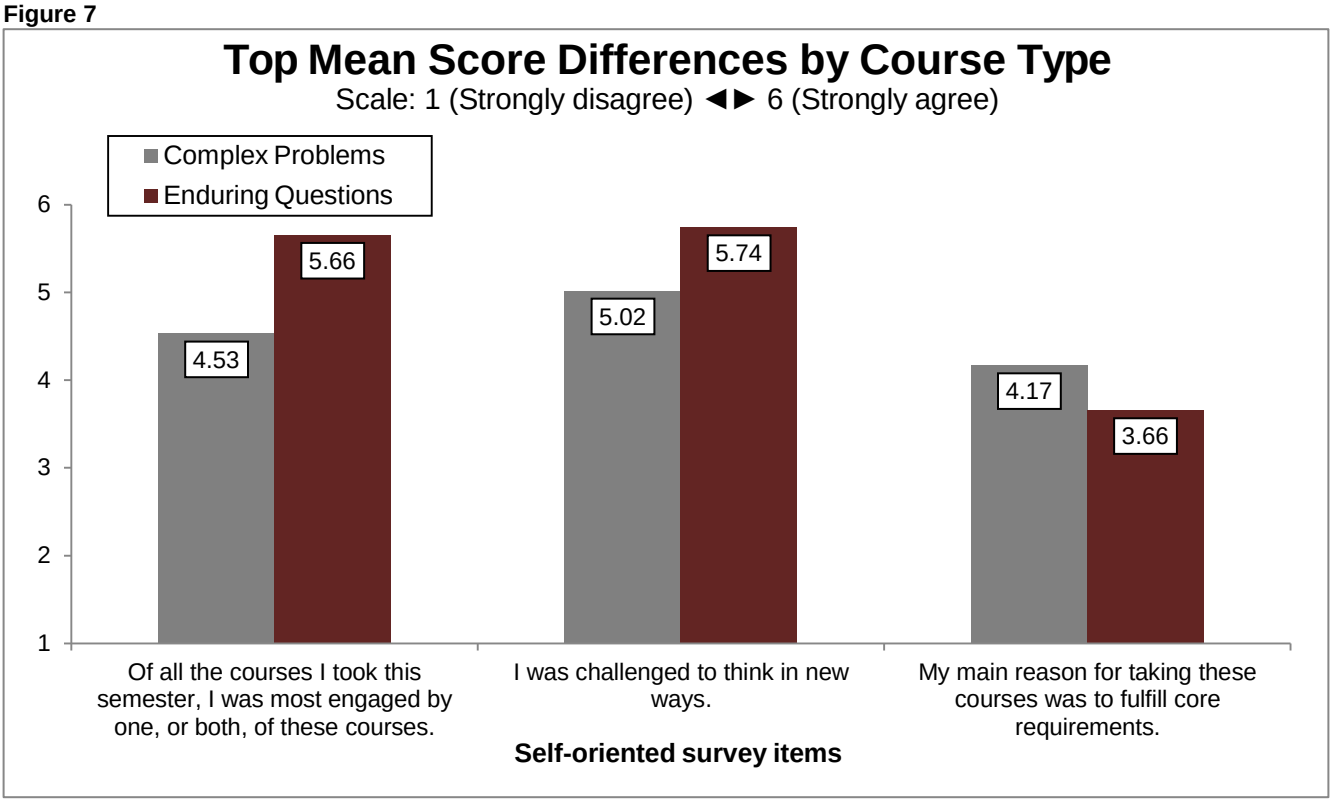
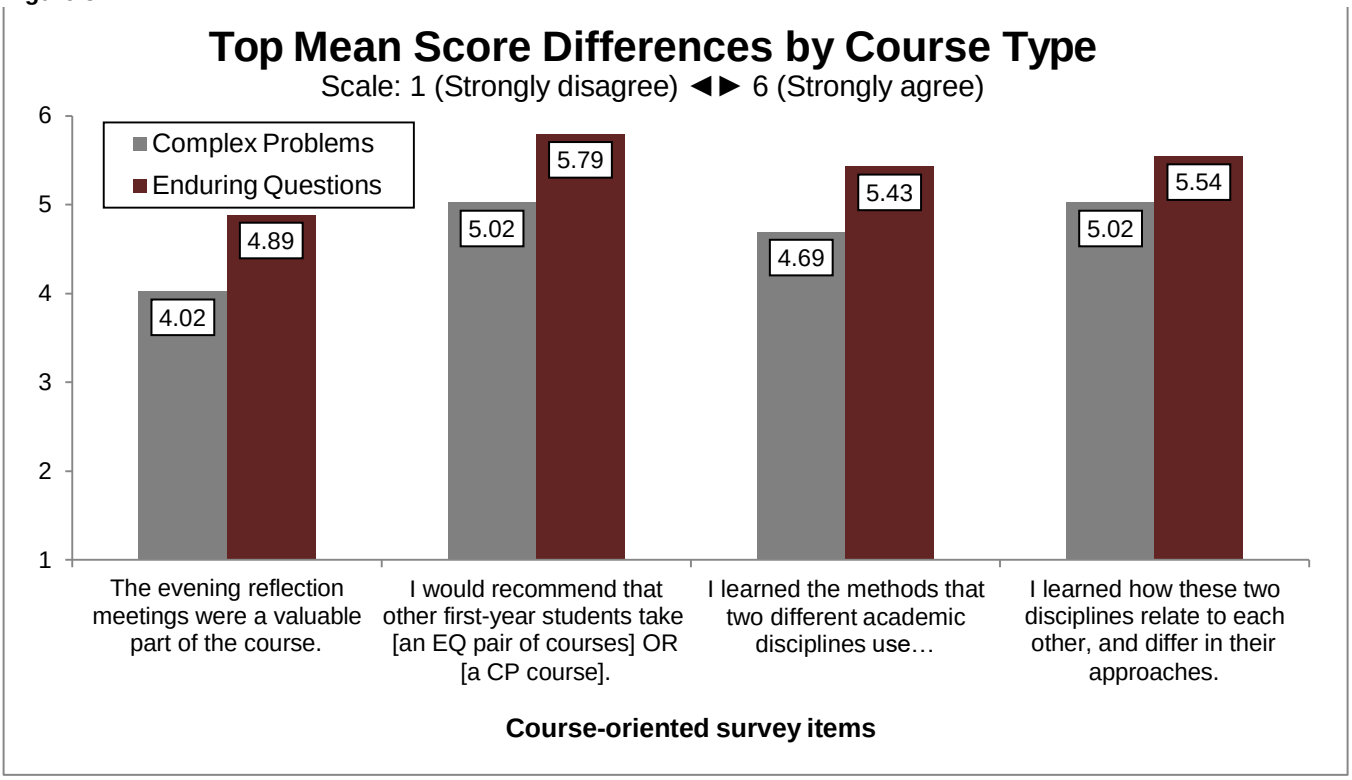


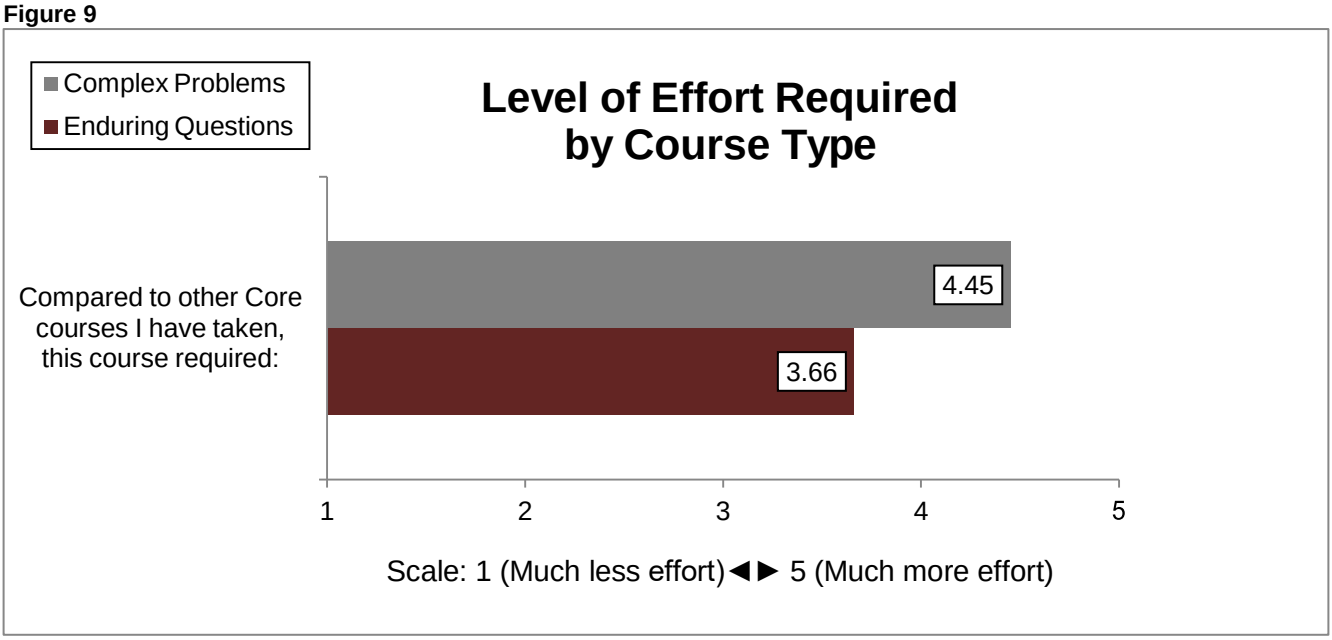
Figure 8



The “level of effort” question was scored on a 5-point scale, and a higher mean was yielded from Complex Problems respondents than from students enrolled in the Enduring Questions courses (see Figure 9):

- *Compared to other Core courses I have taken, this course required* [much less effort - much more effort] (CP = 4.45, EQ = 3.66, Δ = 0.79) (5-point scale)

Figure 9



Minutes for September 14, 2015 UCRC Meeting
10:30am, Gasson 105

The October 5 meeting was rescheduled for Tuesday October 13 at 9:00 am. Then, the core counsel was explained to the committee as the representatives from each academic department who are designated to handle the core curriculum in their respective departments.

Next, the committee discussed the core website, and how to improve its clarity and effectiveness. First, the master list of core courses was announced. It will be sent to the core counsel for each representative's approval. Next, the problem of AP/IB credits and the core was brought up. Currently, Mary French handles all incoming questions about AP/IB credits for core, but it was suggested that more information offered on the website. Next, it was suggested that there be active links to the course description and information from the master list of core courses. Then, it was suggested that the OIP pre-approved course list be edited since it is noticeably inaccurate. Next, it was noted that the non-BC course approval process description on the webpage was repetitive and confusing, specifically concerning questions of who can grant core approval. Finally, it was mentioned that the core representatives differ from the representative who handles study abroad courses for the department. It was suggested that these two individuals are made aware of each other's position, and have better communication.

The next point of discussion was the subcommittees and their roles in the UCRC. The Core Renewal Subcommittee is tasked with reviewing applications for complex problems and enduring questions courses and evaluating pilot courses that are being taught in the 2015-2016 academic year. It was asked whether the departments would have input in the evaluation/assessment of the pilot courses, specifically whether or not the course is up to the department's individual standards for the core (*or in general?).* It was suggested that student input be integral in the evaluation of the pilot courses.

My notes on the next 2 committees are unclear. I do recall that there was no discussion for these subcommittees, but rather you just explained their function and duties.

Then the role of professional schools in the core was briefly discussed. Some professional schools are designing core courses that are co-taught by professional school professors and A&S professors. These courses are specifically for professional students.

Next, the core pedagogical innovation grant was discussed. It is the grant for faculty that will go towards sponsoring co-curricular projects that allow the class discussion to continue outside of the classroom. For example, a guest lecturer may be brought in to augment the curriculum.

It was then suggested the advising in the core throughout the four years at BC be improved. In this way, maybe the students' perception of the core can be changed to understand it as a signature quality of BC, rather than a requirement for graduation.

The conversation then changed to professors who were already a part of the core pilot courses and their experiences so far. The pedagogical seminar was praised in the way it allowed broader thinking of teaching goals and ways of engaging with students, as well as practical exercises that two co-professors might use in a their classroom. Then one professor spoke on his experience of teaching a pilot course. There was a lot of preparation, and registration was especially complicated, due to the number of sections each student had to sign up for. Feedback for the intensive reflection component (where seniors become leaders of the course, and can talk with the freshmen) is especially positive. It is useful to have two professors who can talk about the same topic from two different perspectives (climate change from the natural science and social science views) and this creates interesting and educated discussions.

Finally, the committee gave a frank assessment of the pilot courses and the renewal process as they currently stand. One committee member noted that reception of the core renewal program is mixed, but if there is enough faculty support to fuel the program, then it may not be important to convert those who do not fully support the program. Next, the issue of faculty resources was brought up: if each professor is teaching a core renewal course with 35 students, instead of teaching the old core course with 300 students, then who will teach the rest of the students not in the core renewal courses? Additionally, if AP/IB credit is eliminated from the core, then this will present an even greater problem. *It was suggested that the departments who would suffer most from the faculty resources problem could have more co-taught courses so that there would be more options for their core (?)* It was next suggested that the students who are currently enrolled in the pilot courses should have their academic paths mapped to assess them and their trajectory through BC. Finally, the questions of how to sustain the core renewal program was posed, especially given the faculty resources problem.

Next, the committee discussed more hurdles to the evolution of the core renewal that should be addressed. One member suggested that the character of the current core renewal be made clear to the faculty. Some faculty members were put off by the initial involvement of outside consultants, but that is no longer the case, since faculty and students have, for the most part, taken over the renewal process. Another member asked if there was a process or plan to handle or discontinue the unsuccessful pilot courses.

Next, one committee member said that the conversations happening across campus about the core renewal program were opening up lots of interesting discussions that were bringing together different members of BC with shared interests. Then the luncheons scheduled for Thursday 9/17 and Wednesday 9/23 for faculty members interested in teaching a pilot course was announced as an opportunity for the faculty to start these conversations.

Next, a committee member asked about the information that the board was receiving. They want to make sure that the board is receiving accurate information that is consistent with what is happening across campus.

Next, the issue of the effects of teaching a pilot course on a junior faculty member's tenure track was raised. One member expressed that it should be explicitly discussed that teaching this course will not affect the way they are evaluated when they are up for tenure. Then, another member brought up how part time faculty members, specifically older senior faculty members who have been phased out of full time positions, are not allowed to teach these pilot courses. It was argued that these dedicated faculty members could teach these new courses energetically, particularly because of their status at the university. Additionally, these same professors have the passion and expertise that is necessary for upper level classes, and can recast that for a first year level. Then a member suggested that there be senior level core courses, maybe an enduring questions type of course that spanned 2 semester and had 4 different professors that allowed them to approach a single topic from a variety of perspectives. Finally, a member mentioned that non-academic staff should be involved in the core, specifically the Library. They are integral in teaching students how to conduct scholarly research, and should have a voice in the core renewal process.

The conversation then turned to how to change students' perception of the core. It was expressed that the core should be presented as an integral part of the BC experience. To start a discussion about the usefulness of the core, we should start with the faculty. Not only can the faculty present a common understanding of the core, but also some faculty members feel that the core is being planned around them, rather than with them. It was then expressed that the freshmen do not have a good idea of the core, what it is about, or why they should have to complete it. It was then suggested that there should be a conversation among the faculty that addresses these questions, so the faculty can inform the students as well as model the conversation for them. Next, a member said that it was assumed that this conversation happened for the students at freshmen orientation, but no one knows definitely. Then, another member suggested that the core is so large that it becomes a distribution requirement, and that maybe reducing the size of the core, but keeping the distributions could make it more appealing to students.

The meeting was then concluded with the request that any other troubleshooting or suggestions about moving forward be sent to Dean Bourg, and that the committee members spread the word about the pilot course luncheon to all potentially interested colleagues.

UCRC Meeting
Tuesday October 13, 2015
9:00 a.m., Gasson 105

The minutes of Monday September 14 were approved without corrections.

The next UCRC meeting will be on Monday November 2 at 10:30 a.m. in Gasson 105. There will be a prepared agenda, but committee members are welcome to suggest items to add before the next meeting. The position for the assistant to the core has been posted. The close date for that application is November 2. The core pedagogical innovation grant ($500 per class; larger grants for departments or collaborations) will be announced shortly. This grant is for professors teaching old core classes who are looking to revitalize current courses they are teaching.

The Core Maintenance Subcommittee reported on their most recent meeting held on Tuesday October 6, 2015. This committee consisted of Dawei Chen, Audrey Friedman, and Julian Bourg. 15 proposals were reviewed for core credit, and 12 were recommended. 2 were sent back to the applying professors for further development since the syllabus was not comprehensive enough. 1 course did not seem to adequately fulfill the cultural diversity requirement and was denied credit.

The question was raised whether, when a course was being submitted for core credit, the chair of the department should be informed. This is a complicated because for core clusters with multiple departments involved (i.e. ENGL, RLRL, SLAV all contribute to the literature core) do not have a single department chair. It was decided to change the language of the process to say that core credit approval is contingent on the department chair's approval. This decision was strongly supported by all members of the committee.

The next deadline for new core course approvals is December 1. The subcommittee will meet in early December to review these applications. These core courses approved on October 6 will be eligible to be taught in the spring of the 2015-2016 academic year.

The Core Renewal Subcommittee presented the core renewal proposals that they want to support. After their meeting, there is a clearer understanding of what a core renewal course should look like, and now the committee is better prepared to verbalize this to the faculty. While the committee reviewed the course list, the subcommittee noted that Trese Ainsworth and Franco Mormando's course title needed to be shortened and that there was one course that was sent back without recommendation.

Since there are 9 new Core Renewal courses that will satisfy the literature core, and there will be new 1991 Core core courses, the literature core offerings will be adjusted through the English department, meaning that the English department will have to offer 5-10 fewer core courses.

The question was posed whether professors teaching Core Renewal courses will be required to teach their courses at least twice, especially given the amount of time and

resources that are invested into the preparation of each course. There is no rule that requires this, but professors are strongly encouraged to teach this course again. However, the course is not beneficial for the students when it is not successful or when the professor partnership is not working. The Core Renewal program is currently in a three-year trial period, and after these three years, the committee will work on a long term sustainable plan.

There is no definite policy on graduate students teaching Core Renewal courses, but the committee is generally reluctant to allow it, and only will allow it under special circumstances. It was then noted that Michael Smith (Philosophy) and Colin Connors (Philosophy) are both part time faculty, and not graduate students.

The committee feels that the reflection portion of the Core Renewal courses is unclear to many of the faculty. These courses are difficult to coordinate for larger courses. One course has smaller sections that meet once a week, and are led by seniors and juniors who were chosen over the summer through an interview process. There is a considerable amount of preparation for this section, since the student leaders need to be interviewed, trained, be given a clear plan for each session, and be briefed before and after each session. There is a similar program for the freshman seminar in the Lynch School of Education. It was suggested that these students hold a panel so they can talk about their experiences to give the faculty a concrete idea of the reflection portion of the course. This could possibly be done through more spring pedagogical workshops. These should occur in the spring, rather than over the summer, and be more practical. The schedule is not yet decided, but there are potentially 36 faculty signed up, and there may need to be 2 sessions.

The possibility of having the Core Renewal courses would be able to count for major requirements, specifically in the Lynch School.

There was unanimous approval of the courses that the subcommittee had recommended.

UCRC Meeting
Monday, November 2, 2015
10:30 a.m., Gasson 105

Attendees:
Jeff Bloechl, Julian Bourg, Sean Clarke, Dawei Chen, Audrey Friedman, Gail Kineke, Rich McGowan, S.J., Franco Mormando, John Rakestraw, Virginia Reinburg, Akua Sarr, and Cynthia Simmons

The minutes of Tuesday, October 13th were approved without changes.

The next UCRC meeting will be on Monday, December 7th at 10:30 in Gasson 105. Committee members are welcome to suggest items to add before the next meeting. The next deadline for new core course approval is December 1st. There are some issues with the website that are being addressed. We are currently in the process of receiving applications for the Assistant Director for the Core. Committee members are welcome to refer eligible candidates, and preference is being given to applicants with M.A. or Ph.D. degrees. The position will involve everything from meeting with students to larger curriculum planning.

In anticipation of the revising of the Core requirements in the university's 1991 vision statement, we are currently in discussions with departments and clusters. They are being asked to conceptualize how they would explain to the public, including students and parents, how and why the core requirements in their department/cluster are foundational and imperative to students' educations. Committee will revisit this topic with some concrete ideas in assisting departments in the December meeting.

All 2016-2017 approved core courses are going forward with the exception of Salameh/Laurence course. Complex Problems courses seem to be more work than Enduring Questions courses. December 10th there is a meeting to finalize courses titles and descriptions. Teaching Assistants are needed for the Complex Problems courses, and the fact that departments utilize TAs in different ways is presenting challenges. Office of Marketing and Communication is going to start working on the marketing for these courses. A few classes will be increased up to 25 students. We need to ensure that the renewed core courses do not create a shortage of other core courses.

Students in experimental courses will fill out an additional course evaluation, which will be available at the next meeting. Renewed Core faculty and TAs will also participate in focus groups. From what we have heard so far, students and faculty are finding them more challenging and arduous than other core classes.

The question was raised about a sustainability core requirement. Several suggestions were given, including weaving a sustainability element into all core courses, a sustainability course

cluster, and a sustainability concentration. Committee seemed in support of a sustainability concept, and, therefore, this will be revisited at a later meeting.

A proposal for a truth-telling core pilot was presented. Most of the committee were in support of the concept and very excited to see students passionate about assisting in formulating the core curriculum. However, most agreed that implementation is currently infeasible due to the number of faculty required.

In regards to the Reflection piece of Core Renewal, more engagement between faculty and non-academic staff is needed, particularly with staff in the career center and libraries. Students may perform better in their coursework if they have an understanding of how it connects to their future career options. One issue at hand may be that some faculty do not understand exactly what certain non-academic staff members do; therefore, it may be a good idea to formulate ways to educate faculty on these resources.

A question was raised about whether Advanced Placement (AP) courses should continue to count for core credits. AP courses counting for core credit can be problematic in that they are not college-level courses, as well as the issues inherent to teaching to a test. However, removing this option creates possible issues such as not having enough faculty to teach courses that AP would substitute and students finding BC a less attractive as an schooling option. Furthermore, some students use AP courses to decrease their college tuition costs. For the next meeting, committee was asked to reflect on the relationship between the core and AP in the hopes of creating an advisement piece for departments.

For next meeting, these additional topics will be discussed: 1) study abroad and substitution credit, 2) the integration of core courses, and 3) ways to assist faculty in co-creating core courses.

UCRC Meeting
Monday, December 7, 2015
10:30 a.m., Gasson 105

Attendees:
Robert Bartlett; Jeffrey Bloechl; Julian Bourg; Dawei Chen; Mary Crane; Audrey Friedman; Brian Gareau; Gail Kineke; Richard McGowan, S.J.; Franco Mormando; John Rakestraw; Virginia Reinburg; Akua Sarr; and Cynthia Simmons.

The minutes of Monday, November 2nd were approved without changes.

The next UCRC meeting will be early next semester Committee members are welcome to suggest items to add before the next meeting. The deadline for the Core Pedagogical Improvement Grants was December 1st. The grant is for $500 per class or $2,000 per department with the goal being to open up experimentation for the original core courses. Only a few applications were submitted, and since we plan to offer this grant every semester, suggestions for increasing awareness about the grant are welcomed.

The Center for Teaching Excellence (CTE) recently held faculty seminars on pedagogy and the core. We received a lot of positive feedback from faculty, and CTE plans to offer more of these seminars in the future. We are welcoming topic suggestions as well as suggestions for getting more faculty -- particularly new faculty -- to attend.

The core needs to be promoted to both incoming freshmen and incoming faculty. While core is discussed during orientation, this promotion should be an ongoing process. Furthermore, continual teaching of core courses by faculty should be a considered in the determination of tenure and promotion. Next semester the UCRC should consider drafting a statement to the tenure and promotion committee informing them of the labor involved in renewed core courses. It was suggested that the Intersections retreat may be a natural place to promote teaching of the core. It was also recommended that faculty mentor-mentee coaching for teaching core courses may be helpful for new professors.

Committees that are working on updating the core course requirements language are making progress and their work should conclude in February. The resulting language will be used to generate a new plan for assessment. It was suggested that the final drafts from these committees should be viewed by an informed yet non-academic audience for evaluation.

In regards to the core course applications, not many applications were received, and most of what was submitted was for cultural diversity core. Of the applications that were approved, all of them were for Cultural Diversity except for one, which was for the Fine Arts core. Additionally, one application was sent back for revision. More clarification is needed on what courses should count for Cultural Diversity credit, which would set a standard for professors and give students clarity. Some students on campus are frustrated by current cultural diversity core standards,

with some of them viewing it as a part of a “White core”. Recommendations are welcomed and can be e-mailed to Julian Bourg and Mary Crane.

Evaluation surveys for the renewed core courses have been passed out in faculty meetings. Focus groups with faculty and TAs will be conducted in addition to individual faculty interviews. For the sake of transparency, results will be made public. Hopefully results will be available by the next meeting. In regards to next semester, all renewed core courses are full, and four workshops (two being from CTE) for faculty teaching the core have been arranged. Marketing has formulated the general marketing plan and are currently working on the details, including videos and direct mailings. For 2016-17, the number of student enrolled in renewed core courses is projected to be approximately 750. A town hall or public meetings about the core are also being considered.

An action plan needs to be developed for core renewal for the post-pilot phase that includes a consistent and engaging focus on the core for students throughout their tenure at BC. Other considerations include: 1) how are resources impacted?, 2) how can assessment be made more meaningful?, 3) can faculty commit to repeatedly teaching a course?, 4) are incentives for faculty and departments sustainable, and 5) what is the impact of the administration ministry? Additionally, if these courses continue, faculty may need a course load reduction to counter the work required for the renewed core courses. It would be a good idea to look at other schools that have revamped their core and understand how they structured, managed, and incentivized it. Lastly, the plan needs to take into account department variability and focus.

UCRC Meeting
Monday, February 1, 2016
10:30 a.m., Gasson 105

Attendees:
Mackenzie Arnold ‘17, Robert Bartlett; Jeffrey Bloechl; Julian Bourg; Dawei Chen; Mary Crane; Brian Gareau; Gail Kineke; Richard McGowan, S.J.; Franco Mormando; John Rakestraw; Akua Sarr; and Cynthia Simmons.

The minutes of Monday, December 7 were circulated.

The two agenda items for the meeting were: announcements and a presentation on preliminary results from the fall 2015 Renewed Core classes.

A Core Town Hall is scheduled for Monday, 4:00 p.m. in Fulton 511.

Final interviews are being conducted for the Assistant Director of the Core position.

The Curriculum Subcommittee will meet on Tuesday February 16 to review faculty applications for granting Core credit to new classes.

The Assessment Subcommittee will soon meet to review department/cluster statements of Core requirements (revisions based on the 1991 Core Task Force Report updated in light of the 2014 Vision statement). NEASC reaccreditation is imminent, and the Assessment Subcommittee with also need to help prepare the Core report. Core E-1-A’s are due May 31, although elements of draft report should be in place by the last UCRC meeting on Tuesday, May 10. The Core a strategic priority of the university and assessing both the existing and the Renewed Core will be important.

After the upcoming Town Hall, the Core Renewal Subcommittee will likely convene to address: (1) the questions that have been raised in the forum, (2) how to bring faculty together in advance of AY17-18 Core Renewal applications to be submitted in fall 2016, and (3) the forms of pilot course assessment/review that will be useful next year.

The UCRC appointments of the following people end on June 30, 2016: Audrey Friedman,, Cynthia Simmons, Rich McGowan, S.J., and Jeff Bloechl. The first three seats are elected, and the last is appointed by the Dean of Arts and Sciences. The nominating process is now open via the Provost’s office and will close February 19. Elections will replace one Lynch School seat, one CSOM seat, and one university-wide seat.

The Provost has asked different school Deans and EPCs to examine the question of diversity at Boston College. The UCRC will discuss diversity and the Core in coming months. A working

group on the Cultural Diversity Core requirement has already been established and can be built upon.

Julian Bourg, Mary Crane, and faculty who taught pilots in fall 2015 discussed Core Renewal with new students and their parents at Admitted Eagle Day. The three sessions were full over overflowing.

Promotion of the 2016-2017 Core Renewal classes is moving forward. The Office of Marketing Communication is developing a plan involving videos of faculty and direct mailings to newly admitted students and their parents.

The first of four pedagogical seminar for 2016-2017 Core Renewal faculty was held on January 27. Dean Kalscheur led a discussion on Ignatian Pedagogy and faculty who taught pilots in the fall 2015 semester shared their experiences. The Enduring Questions and Complex Problems faculty met separately. In the next pedagogical seminar, staff from Student Affairs and Mission and Ministry will discuss with faculty possible collaborations between Core Renewal faculty and non-academic staff who work with students, especially around the Reflection dimension of the pilot courses. Additionally, Tom McGuiness, Associate Vice Provost, will discuss with faculty the distinctive needs of first-year students, strategies for engaging students' affective lives, and supplementary resources to which faculty can turn.

In the second half of the UCRC meeting, Mary Crane gave a preliminary update on evaluation data from the fall 2015 pilot courses. Assessment was based on normal student surveys, specially designed student surveys, and focus groups with faculty, Teaching Assistants, and in one case undergraduate Reflection leaders. Crane noted that marketing and promotion may skew evaluation results (other classes are not similarly marketed); there was more demand than available seats, and self-selection played a role in which students took these classes; and these students had only one semester of college courses on which to base their judgments.

Overall, all the pilots received ratings above the norm for the "course overall" rating. Students in some classes thought that the workload of the pilots was somewhat less than other classes—a finding we want to deliberately address. There was variety in what "labs" for Complex Problems courses did and how well they worked. One unintended benefit emerged for Enduring Questions classes that met every day; students claimed a sense of cohort and community that made the experience distinctive. The question was raised: If students feel very comfortable and are friends with classmates will they be more or less likely to engage in intellectual disagreement? Scores from the specially designed surveys related to the place of religious faith in course content also received somewhat lower scores. The UCRC observed that the survey question might next time be phrased differently, focusing on "thinking about religious faith" as opposed to reflecting on *one's own* religious faith or spirituality. The reality of students belonging to different faith communities was raised. The pilots seemed to do a very good job in providing first-year students a meaningful transition to college and many referred to the way that they carried

intellectual discussion *outside* the classroom into the halls, their dorms and dining halls, and with friends who were not taking the class.

There was furthermore variety with respect to the Reflection dimension of these classes. Few classes worked with Student Affairs and Mission and Ministry. On the other hand, faculty tended to take the Reflection component seriously and elaborated a range of experiments and experiences. The UCRC discussed the need to take advantage of the opportunity created by students' comfort in connecting intellectual content to their lives and the broader world—a unique aspect of the pilots' design. Upperclass students who served as Reflection leaders in one course deeply appreciated the formative experience themselves.

In coming months there should be further reflection on what the UCRC would like to know about the pilots. Next year, will it make sense to have committee members visit a class, not to evaluate the faculty member but to gauge how the pilots are working as a distinctively structured kind of class.

Budgets for co-curricular activities are not yet fixed. Funds are available, and part of the pilot experiment is to invite faculty innovation while gradually determining what sustainable funding will be required. In short, classes seem to be spending similar amounts on co-curricular activities, and we will need to monitor expenditures and programming as we move forward.

While not part of the current planning, it might be possible to run one pilot course next year involving two faculty from the "same" Core requirement (e.g., one Econ and one Soc faculty member for both social science Core credits in a single six-credit class). Again, the moment of experiment might permit this option. Still, the main vision of the pilots calls for collaboration among faculty with different expertise.

Faculty who taught the pilots, especially the Complex Problems courses, consistently emphasized the large amount of work to develop and teach the classes. There are many moving parts. Concerns over research productivity, tenure and promotion, the status of junior faculty, evaluations, the burden on department needs—these concerns were raised. Benefits to junior faculty for teaching Core Renewal classes will need to be spelled out. The place of the Honors Program and the professional schools (the latter have severe staff restrictions for faculty contributions to general education) will similarly need to be clarified. Finally, there needs to be occasion for students to have directed conversations about the Core as part of the process of Renewal.

UCRC Meeting
Monday, March 14, 2016
10:30 a.m., Gasson 105

Attendees:
Robert Bartlett; Julian Bourg; Sean Clarke; Mary Crane; Audrey Friedman; Brian Gareau; Charlie Keenan; Gail Kineke; Richard McGowan, S.J.; Virginia Reinburg; Akua Sarr; and Cynthia Simmons.

The minutes of the February 1, 2016 meeting were pre-circulated.

The new Assistant Director of the Core, Charlie Keenan, was introduced.

The results of the university-wide UCRC election were announced. Patrick Byrne (Philosophy) *elected (at-large)*, Jackie Lerner (LSOE) *elected*, Richard McGowan, S.J. (CSOM) *re-elected*. Audrey Friedman and Cynthia Simmons will leave the UCRC on June 30. Jeff Bloechl will be replaced by an appointee selected by Dean Kalscheur.

The Core is figuring in three levels of university planning: the State of the Core report (June 1), NEASC assessment (over the summer in preparation for the 2017 external accreditation visit), and Strategic Planning (Akua Sarr and Julian Bourg are co-chairs of the undergraduate liberal arts subcommittee; Mary Crane is a co-chair of the graduate program review subcommittee).

At the next UCRC meeting (April 11), Bourg will present an update on discussions with faculty and students on Cultural Diversity and the Core. The Provost has asked different school Deans and Educational Policy Committees (EPCs) to examine diversity in curricula and classrooms.

A discussion was held on ways to promote Core Pedagogical Innovation Grants. It was suggested to work through chairs, directors of undergraduate studies, and school EPCs, as well as to check with the University Council on Teaching to see how they promote the grants they sponsor. It would be useful to give examples of the kinds of projects this grant can cover. The $500/course budget should be raised (Cornerstone courses offer $750/class). The question of budgets for Core Renewal courses was also raised. During the pilot period, no precise budget line exists, which creates some flexibility. Renewal courses are being approved for approximately $1000 for co-curricular expenses.

The Assessment Subcommittee had met to discuss revised Core requirement descriptions authored by departments and clusters of departments. Initial feedback was given, and the UCRC will discuss these documents at the April 11 meeting. A reminder was given that May 31 is the deadline for Core E-1-A's and that elements of a State of the Core report will be discussed at the last UCRC meeting of the semester on Tuesday, May 10.

On behalf of the Curriculum Subcommittee, Ginny Reinburg reported that it met on February 16 and approved five classes (four for Cultural Diversity and one for History). One proposal was judged a revise and resubmit.

On behalf of the Core Renewal Subcommittee: Mary Crane gave a report on the Core Town (February 29), the spring 2016 pedagogical seminars for 2016-2017 pilot faculty, the question of what we want to know about the pilots next year (building on the focus groups and student surveys run by Institutional Research this year). The Town Hall was generally positive, especially hearing from faculty who taught pilots last fall. Survey results will be posted on the Core website early in the summer. The need to work through the Board of Chairs and possibly visit departments in order to share information on the pilots was discussed, as well as the challenge of bringing faculty together to propose classes for the third year of the pilots (deadline October 2016 for 2017-2018 courses). The spring 2016 pedagogical seminars have been going well, realizing the lesson learned that we need to start early to effectively plan these complex courses. Ideas for bringing faculty together this spring to plant the seeds of collaboration included: a mini-conference, lunches, and the Provost teas (that bring two departments together). Alongside the challenge of intellectual connection, the following point was raised: departments' logistical concerns weigh as heavily. Outreach to the natural sciences and the professional schools was broached, bearing in mind that faculty teaching pilots and students taken them needs to consider the heavy requirements they already have in place. Chairs should be reminded that if participation in the pilots creates new curricular needs, then they should communicate that fact when faculty apply, and accommodations will be pursued. Plans for the marketing and promotion of the 2016-2017 courses are underway. The pilots will be discussed at the two upcoming Admitted Eagle Days (April 10 & 17).

Finally, in light of the upcoming NEASC and Strategic Planning reports on the Core, a discussion was held on two questions: *What do our students need from liberal arts education?* and *What are the main problems/weaknesses with the Core today?*

The value of liberal arts related to liberty, to being a free human bring. This idea of autonomy and independence can be traced back to Aristotle and forward to the practice of democracy in our own day. It involves the questions that will enable students to stand on their own feet and act meaningfully. Liberal arts means to conduct an inquiry, to do research. It put together ethical and political stances and back them up with knowledge, developing an understanding of how the world works and how one can act in the world. Students learn how to evaluate evidence critically, using reflective judgment and developing the ability to engage others' perspectives and becoming self-aware about the privilege and consequent responsibility they have. The liberal arts involve becoming acquainted with multiple perspectives beyond one's own. In the professional schools, the liberal arts create a balance with the push to become technicians. BC is somewhat distinctive in the large place liberal arts, notably the Core, play in professional education. Nursing students, for instance, broaden their horizons of human experience and thought by taking classes in Arts and Sciences. Business students learn that there are many stakeholders from diverse backgrounds in the world, and that one cannot be successful unless one develops the ability to ask and answer the question: Why do people think the way they do? The value of the liberal arts cannot be separated from the content of the liberal arts. They enable students to learn how to think, and they involve less specific programs than general principles.

The discussion turned to the problems and weaknesses of the Core. We do not do as good a job as we could in defining, explaining, and justifying the intellectual discipline or project at the

heart of a Core subject, the skills and competencies that students should learn. Methods and content of a Core subject can be seen to revolve around or be based in projects: both of individual disciplines and requirements as well as of liberal arts more generally. Students too often treat the Core as boxes to check. There is little integration of the Core and major requirements. We do not adequately explain how Core classes are substantively different than classes taken in high school. Indeed, based on their titles, some Core classes look like high school classes. What is different about Core classes? How can they be integrated with one another? How can the Core *raise the intellectual level of BC student culture*? One person spoke of hearing from first-year students now unchallenging Core classes are; their high school classes were more difficult. Class size affects what can happen in a Core class. The quality of teaching in the Core varies. A wide range of faculty and instructors teach in the Core, from senior professors to graduate students. The role of the Core in a department also varies a great deal. Some faculty perceive teaching in the Core as a burden. Others make it a priority. There is a need to articulate common criteria for the Core that cut across disciplines.

UCRC Meeting
Monday, April 11, 2016
10:30 a.m., Gasson 105

Attendees:
Julian Bourg; Dawei Chen; Sean Clarke; Mary Crane; Audrey Friedman; Gail Kineke; Charles Keenan; Richard McGowan, S.J.; Franco Mormando; John Rakestraw; Virginia Reinburg; Akua Sarr; Cynthia Simmons

The minutes of the March 14 UCRC meeting were pre-circulated. The next UCRC meeting, on May 10, at noon, was announced.

An announcement was made about Core Pedagogical Innovation Grants, intended to help faculty adapt existing courses to better fulfill Core learning objectives. These are due April 22. UCRC members were encouraged to spread the word about these grants to their colleagues.

Discussion was had on a former requirement that students take at least nine of their Core courses at Boston College (i.e., rather than taking them abroad or fulfilling those requirements through Advanced Placement credit). This seems to have fallen out of practice, and the question was raised asked whether it should be reinstated. One concern was over logistics: whether there would be enough BC faculty to teach these courses if no one tested out of Core classes, and whether this would be another burden on Student Services and students' advisors to monitor during registration. Additionally, given the cost of college education, the point was raised whether it was not in students' best interest to try and fulfill as many requirements before arriving at BC as possible. The conclusion was that more data needs to be gathered before this question can be answered – determining how many students apply AP credit to the Core requirements currently, how many students take Core courses at BC despite already having AP credit for them, etc. Julian Bourg and Charles Keenan will look into these questions with Student Services.

The Curriculum Subcommittee reported that it met on April 7 and approved four courses for Core credit (one for Arts, one for Literature, two for History) and turned down one proposal, a Sociology class that would have fulfilled the Social Science requirement. Because the History Department is trying out new types of Core courses, which includes the two approved here, Dean Bourg and/or the UCRC will follow up with the History Department next year to see how these changes have played out and what feedback there may be.

With respect to Core Renewal, potential faculty pairings to teach pilot courses in the 2017-18 academic year are being pursued. UCRC members were asked to encourage their colleagues to propose courses if they are interested in teaching in the renewed Core. A plan will be needed for the post-pilot period (i.e., after the third year of pilots conclude in 2017-18), perhaps by next June (for instance, the question of how renewal courses intersect with programs like PULSE and Perspectives needs to be considered explicitly). Syllabi and budgets for 2016-17 pilot courses are now being collected.

Next, the UCRC reviewed the Core requirement descriptions that were prepared by departments and clusters of departments in light of the revisions proposed by the Assessment Subcommittee. Each description was read aloud and feedback was offered by UCRC members. Feedback with will be relayed back to the respective departments for further revisions before bringing the Core descriptions to Dean Kalscheur for his consideration. (This part of the meeting was dedicated to extensive line edits of the Core requirement descriptions).

Finally, discussion with faculty and students on the Cultural Diversity (CD) Core requirement was reported. The attempt to revisit the CD requirement description led last fall to further to reflection on the need substantially reconsider the structure of the CD requirement. Ongoing conversations and workshops with faculty have been held since the fall, and a working document of problems and proposed solutions with the CD requirement – which has been shown to the provost and Dean Kalscheur – was circulated to the UCRC. Among other things, it proposes that two separate, 3-credit, "double-dipping" requirements replace the existing CD requirement, with one course on pluralism in the United States and another on the global connections and citizenship. Initial feedback was offered, including the observation that the professional schools (CSOM, CSON, LSOE) already have their own paths to fulfilling the CD requirement. Further conversation and consideration on this topic will be arranged. In the near term, further feedback from the UCRC will be solicited by e-mail.

UCRC Meeting
Tuesday, May 10, 2016
12:00 p.m., Gasson 105

Attendees:
Robert Bartlett; Jeffrey Bloechl; Julian Bourg, Sean Clarke, Mary Crane; Audrey Friedman; Charles Keenan; Gail Kineke; Richard McGowan, S.J.; Franco Mormando; John Rakestraw; Virginia Reinburg; Akua Sarr; Cynthia Simmons; Aiden Clarke

Aiden Clarke, the new student representative to the UCRC, was introduced.

A draft of the section of the 2017 NEASC Accreditation Report dealing with the Core Curriculum was discussed. (Some UCRC members had sent line edits to the text beforehand.) This document had been pre-circulated along with preliminary data compiled by the Office of Institutional Research, Planning, and Assessment about the Core Curriculum. The draft offered a description and appraisal of the Core; a third section, "Projections" for the future of the Core, remained to be written. In this conversation, it was felt that a clear statement of the goals of the Core Curriculum was necessary to help orient potential readers, as well as more discussion of the problems with the existing Core. Explicit means of assessing whether – and how – such problems are being addressed should be included as well. More evaluation of the data and the issues raised by this data were also desired, including the fact that the majority of Core courses are currently not taught by full-time, tenure-track faculty. A possible organizing principle for this document would be to focus on the need to integrate undergraduate education across different disciplines and methodologies, an issue which Core Renewal seeks to address. Questions about the place of the Cultural Diversity requirement in this process were also raised, including whether it might serve as an area to address some of the larger issues related to the Core (such as interdisciplinary integration and student engagement). A final topic of conversation was the differing relationship of Morrissey College of Arts & Sciences students and those of the professional schools (CSOM, CSON, LSOE) to the Core, and how the latter's curricular requirements structure their experiences with the Core Curriculum.

Next, three Core Pedagogical Innovation (CPI) grants that had been submitted were reviewed. Faculty who submitted these applications will be contacted with the UCRC's comments. A question was raised about the small number of applications received, and it was noted that different means of advertising CPI grants will be needed in the future.