

Mason Core Committee Retreat  
August 19, 2015  
10:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m., Merten Hall 1202

**Attending:** Janette Muir (Chair), Dominique Banville, Melissa Broeckelman-Post, Kim Eby, Becky Ericson, Doug Eyman, Marcy Glover, Stephanie Hazel, Tamara Maddox, Mara Schoeny, Carol Urban, Andrea Weeks

**Guests:** Carrie Klein and Amy Swan – Higher Education class project  
Solon Simmons – Chief Global Officer

**Assessment: Why do we do it and what's next?**

Assessment is in the process of revising their process and as part of the review, they are working with a group of doctoral students in the Higher Education program. Amy Swan is the instructor for the 17 students. Their goal will be to analyze the Mason Core assessment process and make recommendations on how to revise the process for our next cycle.

To begin the process, the group was asked to **define the purpose of general education.**

- Foundation for life long exposure to that which they might not explore on their own; discover their interests and passions.
- To think critically, reflect, learn independently.
- To better understand and interact with aspects of society; understand other disciplines.
- To become broad thinkers and informed citizens
- Diverse ways of knowing.
- The purpose of general education is to provide foundational experiences to develop an ability to think about the richness of the human experience as members of the global community and to develop key skills that are important across disciplines, careers and communities.

How are we (Mason Core) doing? Transfer students are confused about what the Mason Core is; once they realize it is General Education they are okay. Do we need to work more closely with NVCC to address this issue or is it advising once they get to Mason? Do we need to be part of transfer orientation?

Janette shared with the group her presentation that she gives to students and their parents every year at orientation. We will be adding two of the slides to our website as illustrations of the intersection of the major and the Mason Core. It was recommended that she also add a Learn Over Lunch session of the advising group MAAN. There was a recommendation that the Mason Core be part of the certification program.

**What difference does assessment make? Why do we assess?**

- Accreditation
- External pressures
- To make thoughtful curriculum and pedagogical choices that lead to better learning experiences.
- Where faculty can share their stories (students can as well).

**It is now time to assess the assessment; is the current process giving us the information we need to make informed decisions?**

Describe Mason students:

- Busy
- Focused
- 60-70% are transfer students – this makes assessment difficult
- Value added language does not match the population we are assessing

### **What do we want to know?**

- Are we serving all groups of students equally well?
- Are we adapting to how they learn? Traditional lectures versus technology changes?
- Do we need more undergraduate level courses in the evening? How to determine which courses, when and how many?
- How have they been affected by being pushed outside their comfort zone?
- Does the Mason Core really map to the major and the Mason graduate?

### **How the class will be structured**

The students are available to do research on specific questions that the committee has for them. What do we want to know in our finished product? Do we want peer review, critique of assessment, only certain categories, high impact practices? How are the various assessments linked (Mason Core, WAC, Mason Online)?

One item that was discussed is the time from assessment to feedback to the units is too long to be acted upon regarding courses or categories of concern.

### **The role and goals of the Global Office**

Solon Simmons, Chief Global Officer, shared the purpose of his office, which is student mobility (international students to Mason and vice versa). It is more than study abroad, but that is a large component. His office has three goals: 1) strengthen pathways to access (INTO Mason); 2) create partnerships and provide a global experience for students, faculty and staff.

He wants to globalize the classroom, and as part of that is changing how Mason conducts and develops our study abroad programs. It is a goal of the university to increase the number of students who study abroad. The goal is to increase participation from 1000 to 3000 students by 2024. He wants to bring a global track to each major and/or program. There are different types of tracks. One is short term, 10 days, faculty lead course in another country. Another is to find a program twin – same program but in a different location. And another is an articulated third year, where a student takes the same curriculum at another institution. This could also be additional two plus two programs.

It is understood that many of our students will not be able to do a study abroad experience. How do we reach them? We need a menu of options (experiences) for our students to choose from.

### **Global Understanding to Global Experience**

After the lunch break, the committee discussed the Global Understanding category and how it could be elevated to a Global Experience, where the courses in the inventory are one way of meeting the university wide requirement that would be required of all students (transfer students would not be waived). Options discussed were:

- Approved Global Understanding courses
- Study abroad
- Experiential learning
- Local “global” experiences
- Local internships (NGO, etc.)
- Specific courses related to the major

**What should a global experience include (learning outcomes or expectations)?**

- Systems understanding
- Interconnectedness
- Working with diverse groups
- Personal enrichment
- Competitive advantage
- Collective responsibility for the world

**How would we document what they are learning (validate/qualify their experience)?**

It should be competency based. There was a mention of portfolios that a student submits when they have completed their requirements that they can then use later to show employers.

**How do we “sell” this to the faculty (elevating the category)?**

- Gen ed is not a cash cow
- This is a job qualification for many students
- It gives us a competitive edge against other universities
- Require in the sophomore year or junior for transfer students

If we are going to elevate this category, we need to do this (with full Faculty Senate approval), but February 16 to make the AY 16-17 catalog.

If we do this, we will require all courses in the inventory to resubmit – no rubber stamp approval.

**It was also recommended that the committee focus on refining the IT category this year.** Tamara will work with her subcommittee, plus Doug to discuss and recommend changes. Please include the ethics component – remove it, make it a separate requirement?