Mason Core Meeting

September 12, 2019

**1:00-2:30pm Merten Hall 3303**

In Attendance:

Bethany Usher, Associate Provost for Undergraduate Education and chair, Melissa Broeckleman-Post, co-chair, Krista Shires, Stephanie Foster, Shelley Reid, Mara Schoeny, Maddie Portnoy, Laura Poms, Courtney Wooten, Samaine Lockwood, Ben Steger, Jane Hooper, Cheryl Druehl

Guests: Tom Polk, Student Government Representative

1. Welcome and Introductions
2. Elect a chair

The committee elects Melissa Broeckelman-Post as chair

1. Orientation
   1. What is Mason Core?

What is the Mason Core’s responsibility in test-out procedures? Currently there is a project being worked on by English Department but it needs a software developer to write an algorithm that will help students determine which class they should be in. There are currently no available funds in the budget for this, but it is a goal. Review of English 302 resulted in a portfolio process to facilitate a more comprehensive review of student work. A conversation regarding university policies and CELP, IB, and AP English coursework as transfer credit.

There seems to be a tension between transfer student coursework and the Mason Core. It is a desire of the committee to address concerns, particularly the Guaranteed Admissions Agreement challenges. These issues seem to arise from processes rather than the learning outcomes or the core itself.

There is also a tension between the messaging attracting students to attend Mason for all four years but also telling students that transfer students are encouraged to attend and are promised the same education. What are we doing in the first two years in the Mason Core in particular to tell students that it is valuable experience to attend for all four years, but at the same time retain the value of the education for the last two years?

Where are we heading with online undergraduate education? Will Mason Core be online? What will be the assessment procedures, approval processes, etc.? This is something that the university will be heading towards but there is currently not infrastructure in place. It can be a challenge to manage curriculum on this scale with multiple departments with potentially differing procedures, interests and goals. The university is hoping to have 5 fully online programs by fall 2022. The decision will be made this year around December. A discussion about Mason Online and current offerings ensued. The Executive Director of Online Education could be invited to a Mason Core meeting to discuss the matter further. It is possible to form a Mason Core sub-committee to consider future endeavors and plan ahead.

* 1. What is general education? **-discussed across items a and c**
  2. How do we review proposals?

Most meeting will involve a combination of proposals and larger conversations (such as item d)

1 week before the meeting, the agenda will be sent out via email. It will also be included online in the committee section, and also on blackboard. There will be a pre-survey sent out with the agenda (which will be available in BB but not on the website). Surveys are meant to facilitate ease of flow in meetings but also to identify whether or not there are questions ahead of time.

Sub-committees are often formed within the core and provide a resource for faculty members who have questions about particular categories. Faculty members receive feedback from the committee if the proposals are not passed. Faculty members (or curriculum coordinators or chairs) are able to attend meetings if they wish, but are not required to attend. Committee members expressed concern that it is harder to discuss the proposals objectively with the proposer in attendance, but are also in favor of transparency.

It was suggested that faculty members could meet with a department (such as education) that is planning to propose several courses for Mason Core as a part of a new curriculum. We want to ensure that we are not policing syllabi, but also want to ensure the quality of the courses that are passed (by focusing on the mason core outcomes). It is also important to consider that some programs use the general education courses to help meet accreditation requirements.

Should sub-committees review particular proposals in advance, or should they be used mostly as a resource to submitters?

* 1. How will we use this year to learn together and prepare for conversations about what is next? -**discussed as part of item c and topic 4**

1. Getting faculty input during the upcoming year: Samaine Lockwood
   1. ITL session

There will be a Conversations with Mason Core presentation after the ITL session at the end of September. Faculty are encouraged to attend and registration with the conference is not required to participate. More information will be disseminated later in the semester.

* 1. Core Conversations

There will be two large open forums for faculty (Oct 21 and Nov 14-location TBA) to allow discussion among faculty around the re-envisioning of the Mason Core. These dates will be posted on the website and sent out in the Mason Core Newsletter when the location reservation has been confirmed.

There will also be a Mason Core Conversations page with readings, a Qualtrics survey for feedback, and a place for questions from faculty

* 1. Focus Groups

Activity- committee members were asked to write down list of people who might be open to being involved in these focus groups (to discuss Mason Core future)

Forums will be guided by the same questions (not a series) on different days to try and capture multiple audiences. Forums will include various topics around general education wi

Spring – will analyze what has been collected this fall. March/April there will be a report out on this in conjunction with assessment reports from Stephanie Foster

1. ITL session planning

The Mason Core Conversations ITL proposal was handed out for committee review and feedback. What is the goal of this mini-workshop? Are we collecting feedback on what is working and what is not working in the current Mason Core? Should the Mason Core be changed and if so how? A discussion ensued. The committee considered the details of a workshop presentation versus an open forum versus focus groups. It was agreed that the workshop is a good place to get the conversation started.