



College of Liberal & Education

March 24, 2015

Dear MFA Members:

The Council of Chairpersons of the College of Liberal Arts and Education is deeply concerned that the new Core Curriculum, the substantive foundation of the University's academic integrity, has been unnecessarily diminished.

Ads on TV, billboards and the UDM webpage assure students "we want great things for you!" That greatness is defined by the UDM Mission statement as "intellectual, spiritual, ethical and social development," and reinforced by the new Core Curriculum Mission statement using the same language. Yet we are poised to give lie to that claim by adopting a Core that undermines the "spiritual, ethical and social" development that leads to that greatness.

Spiritual and intellectual awareness and development are not well promoted with the requirement of only a single broad religious studies course, as specified in the new Core (C2). The current Core offers one required religious studies course (4B) plus a second option (4C) and a few scattered options in other objectives (5A, D & 6B). Reducing that exposure does not lead to a greatness of spiritual and intellectual development. We appreciate that the new Core has included a focus on spirituality and meaning and the importance of personal spiritual development and social justice in requirements F5 and F6. But these are attributes to be linked with other courses, not necessarily courses in themselves, and do not substitute for an actual course that would treat subject matter that would add content and depth to the students' understanding of spirituality and religion.

While the current Core requirement of one ethics course is maintained in the new Core, the intellectual and ethical development of students are not well supported with the expectation of only a single philosophy course(C1). The current Core offers one required philosophy course (4A), a second option (4C), and scattered options in other objectives (5C, D, 6A). Greatness in intellectual development occurs through the study of the great thinkers, theories, ideas, and models of reasoning, not simply in one 14-week course.

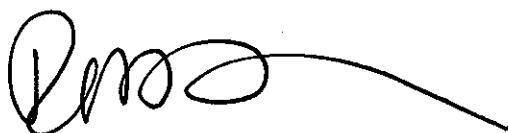
Intellectual and social development is not enhanced by the diminution of the social and natural sciences, another limitation in the new Core (B1 & 2). The current Core requires one of each (3 A & B) plus a third course from either (3C). At a time when biological and chemical breakthroughs and new socio-political understandings are being applied to human beings and communities, greatness demands more attention to student knowledge and development in these areas than is represented in the new Core.

More broadly, we are deeply concerned with the wording of the recommendation that the MFA Core Curriculum Committee be the "sole" entity responsible for the Core Curriculum. This appears to reduce significant curriculum decisions to a popular committee vote rather than to the studied

consideration of subject matter experts. Students are willing to pay higher tuition to come to a Catholic university, depending on it to make curricular decisions based on traditional expertise, and that expectation should be met in our committee structures and procedures.

The promise that we want “great things” for our students is part of our image, our brand, if you will. The Core is the substance of that image. While we are all exhausted by the effort to create a new Core and anxious to have it done, those are not reasons to adopt a Core that undermines the substance of the promise of UDM. Moreover, the new Core has been intentionally ‘reconciled’ with the demand that it not exceed 48 credit hours. Yet because most courses approved for F1-F6 requirements *also* meet A-E Core requirements or program requirements, it is highly unlikely that any student will need 48 credit hours of coursework to meet the minimal requirements of the new Core as proposed. It is more likely that students will meet the requirements in about 36 hours, which minimizes the contribution of the liberal arts and humanities that we consider essential to “integrate the intellectual, spiritual, ethical, and social development of our students.”

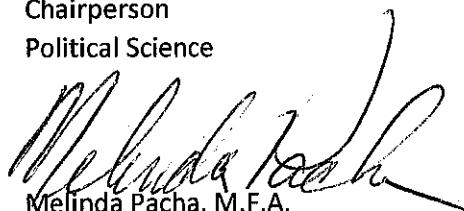
The best of shared governance is the working together of administration and faculty. The CCRC has sent you the results of their efforts. We hope the full MFA and the administration will not abdicate their responsibility to protect the integrity of our promise and the substance of our Mission. The Core must be a strong assurance that UDM delivers “intellectual, spiritual, ethical and social development” worthy of a great university.



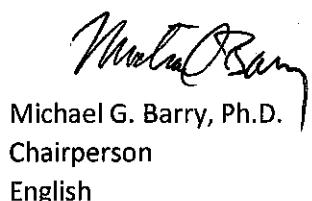
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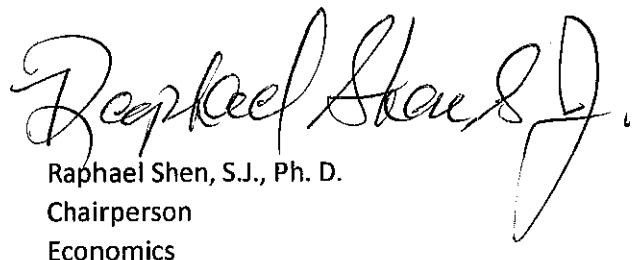
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cc: M. Denham
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