AGLS Award for the Improvement of General Education: Exemplary Program Processes

National and international education officials, accreditors, and faculty leaders increasingly associate "quality" education with student learning outcomes and continuous quality improvement processes. Moving away from the view of education as a simple act of passing a static body of knowledge from faculty to students, they value education practiced as a commitment to a set of collectively-practiced, ongoing activities: making institutional choices about the most important goals for student learning and defining the learning in terms of desired outcomes; developing a shared faculty commitment to actions such as high impact, active learning strategies and faculty development designed to increase student achievement; making informed judgments about student achievement and the impact of various general education program support processes; and ensuring continuous improvements in the educational program. Despite the commitment of academic leaders and accreditors to these processes, too few institutions have documented their success in applying systematic improvement processes to the general education program. As a result, discussions about higher education accountability and improvement conclude that higher education can benefit from models of innovative, effective, and systematic general education program improvements and assessments.

The Association for General and Liberal Studies is the national organization whose mission is singularly committed to quality general education programs and their central role in the liberal education of students. The organization invites institutions to apply for the 2014 AGLS Award for Improving General Education: Exemplary Program Processes. The Award is grounded in the systems analysis questions found in the AGLS publication, Improving Learning in General Education: An AGLS Guide to Assessment and Program Review, and it promotes institutional commitment to continuous quality improvement processes, recognizes faculty and institutions that practice these quality behaviors, and provides much needed examples of effective improvement processes. (See links below to review previously recognized exemplary programs.)

The 2014 Award gives institutions recognition options. Applications describing quality general education program work can be submitted for any one of the following learning improvement processes:

- Building Faculty Ownership of the Program (see "Guide" question A4)
- Achieving General Education Goals Using Co-Curricular Programming (A7)
- Providing Evidence of General Education Learning Though Assessment (J2 and I1)

Judges will identify model program processes for each of three options. An Awards presentation will recognize recipients during the 2014 Annual AGLS Conference, September 25-27, in Atlanta, GA. Representatives from recognized institutions will be asked to present their exemplary processes in an identified special session and, if possible, provide a poster presentation for display throughout the conference; they will also have the opportunity to share their process in AGLS e-publications. Recognized institutions will receive a plaque; acknowledgment on the AGLS website; two half-priced registrations for the 2014 conference, which include AGLS membership for 2014-15; and a half-priced institutional membership for the 2014-15 year.

The Association issues a call for applications in early spring, with a deadline for receipt of submissions in mid-June. Application forms and evaluation rubrics for the 2014 cycle are below.
ASSOCIATION FOR GENERAL AND LIBERAL STUDIES
2014 AGLS Awards for Improving General Education: Exemplary Program Processes

Award Information and Application: Developing Faculty Ownership

National and international education officials, accreditors, and faculty leaders increasingly associate “quality” education with student learning outcomes and continuous quality improvement processes. Moving away from the view of education as a simple act of passing a static body of knowledge from faculty to students, they value education practiced as a commitment to a set of collectively-practiced, ongoing activities: making institutional choices about the most important goals for student learning and defining the learning in terms of desired outcomes; developing a shared faculty commitment to actions such as high impact, active learning strategies and faculty development designed to increase student achievement; making informed judgments about student achievement and the impact of various general education program support processes; and ensuring continuous improvements in the educational program. Despite the commitment of academic leaders and accreditors to these processes, too few institutions have documented their success in applying systematic improvement processes to the general education program. As a result, discussions about higher education accountability and improvement conclude that higher education can benefit from models of innovative, effective, and systematic general education program improvements and assessments.

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Award Selection and Criteria

Applications will be reviewed by an Awards Committee comprised of AGLS Executive Council members, members of accrediting associations, and recognized leaders in general education. The application narrative questions are based on the Systems Analysis questions in the publication, Improving Learning in General Education: An AGLS Guide to Assessment and Program Review (see www.agls.org). Evaluation will focus on the innovative and systematic qualities of the institution’s efforts to grow faculty ownership of general education through structured activities that establish faculty credentials or those that orient new faculty, develop leadership, or improve instruction (Guide question A4) and on how well the institution’s process can serve as a practical model for other institutions. The Committee will consider the evidence offered that the faculty-centric processes produce commitment to program success and that the practices have led to improved student learning. Previously recognized applications can be found on the AGLS website: http://www.agls.org/exemplaryprogram.htm. The application must describe the full “loop” of faculty ownership processes: institutional commitment to improving general education learning by creating faculty ownership of the program, implementation of faculty ownership
processes, the verifiable impact of the processes on faculty and student learning, and the process improvements that follow from the data review, showing continuing commitment to faculty processes.

Application Format

To be considered for the award, an applicant on behalf of an institution should complete:

- Section #1: Contact information for individual submitting the application
- Section #2: Institutional endorsement by either the chief executive or academic officer
- Section #3: Application summary (150 words or less)
- Section #4: Responses to four award criteria, limited to two pages per criterion

Examples of Evidence for Award Criteria

Evidence of merit requires answering the questions under each of the criterion listed in the application below. Evidence should focus on specific activities and processes that employ the continuous quality improvement principles discussed in the AGLS publication Improving Learning in General Education: An AGLS Guide to Assessment and Program Review. The application should clearly present the creative methods used to improve student learning by growing faculty ownership of general education. Supporting material can be summarized as part of the application and narrative, but limit your explanations to two pages per criterion. Please do not use links to data and analysis reports; narrative summary of your key results and processes, within the application, is preferable to links that eventually become inoperable. AGLS offers model narratives as examples of successful processes and assumes that recognized institutions will share with interested institutions additional data or program information.

Award Timeline

March—Application materials available on AGLS website
June 15th—Materials must be received by AGLS
June 20th—Materials distributed to review panel
August 1st—Recipients notified
September 26th—Recipients’ presentations and awards during 2014 AGLS Annual Conference in Atlanta, GA

Suggested Reference Material

Improving Learning in General Education: An AGLS Guide to Assessment and Learning can be found at: www.agls.org. Supporting literature (from regional and specialized accreditors and from AAC&U) is listed in the Guide.

Application Submission

Applications may be submitted as e-mail attachments in Microsoft Word or Adobe Acrobat format, sent to Joyce Lucke at execdir@agls.org. Applications can also be mailed to:

Joyce Lucke, Executive Director
Association for General and Liberal Studies
445 Fifth Street, Suite A
Columbus, IN 47201
ASSOCIATION FOR GENERAL AND LIBERAL STUDIES
2014 AGLS Awards for Improving General Education:
Exemplary Program Processes

Section #1: Contact Information of Person Submitting Application

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Megan Mustain</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Title</td>
<td>Associate Professor and Core Curriculum Director</td>
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<tr>
<td>Institution</td>
<td>St. Mary's University</td>
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<tr>
<td>Department/Program</td>
<td>Core Curriculum, Philosophy</td>
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<tr>
<td>Street Address</td>
<td>1 Camino Santa Maria</td>
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<tr>
<td>City, State, Zip</td>
<td>San Antonio, Texas 78228</td>
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<tr>
<td>Phone</td>
<td>210-436-3073</td>
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<tr>
<td>Email</td>
<td><a href="mailto:mmustain@stmarytx.edu">mmustain@stmarytx.edu</a></td>
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Section #2: Institutional Endorsement

Chief Executive Officer or Chief Academic Officer

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Andre Hampton</th>
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<td>Title</td>
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<td>Institution</td>
<td>St. Mary's University</td>
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<tr>
<td>Phone</td>
<td>(210)436-3716</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fax</td>
<td>(210)431-4213</td>
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<tr>
<td>Email</td>
<td><a href="mailto:ahampton@stmarytx.edu">ahampton@stmarytx.edu</a></td>
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Section #3: Application Summary

Include a summary of the award application. Please begin the narrative with a brief description of your institution and the time frame for the relevant processes. Briefly explain your processes and why you think they equate with quality. The summary should not exceed 150 words. The text box may be increased in size as necessary.

Founded in 1852, St. Mary's University is a Catholic and Marianist liberal arts university in San Antonio, Texas. In 2009, through a thoroughly faculty-driven process, the university approved a new general education core curriculum. In its development, its content, its structure, and in the processes by which it is administered and evaluated, the newly created St. Mary's Core Curriculum fosters a community of faculty that spans all three of the university's undergraduate schools and all faculty ranks, and that brings together otherwise disparate disciplines and departments in reflection upon and service to our university's mission.
Section #4: Award Criteria

Criterion 1: Supporting Faculty Ownership of General Education
Provide a description of how your institution dedicates itself to building faculty commitment to and ownership of a quality general education program. How does your institution enhance ownership through its processes for establishing credentials of faculty, orientation of new faculty, developing leadership, or improving instruction? Include your institution's consideration and inclusion of adjunct and non-tenured faculty in these processes. Address the following issues:

- How your institution aligns its program ownership efforts with institutional mission and general education program goals
- How your institution communicates its support to faculty regarding program ownership through processes such as hiring, evaluation, promotion, tenure, curriculum development, and professional development
- Who defines and identifies the expectations for faculty commitment to and ownership of the general education program
- What value the institution places on faculty ownership of general education program, reflected in its processes for establishing credentials, developing leadership, orienting new faculty, or improving instruction (especially through the use of active learning, faculty collaboration, integrative instruction, or high impact practices).
- Who takes responsibility for showing institutional support for faculty ownership and in what ways
- How the institution communicates this support is ultimately about student learning in general education

Please limit your response to two pages. The following text box may be increased in size as necessary.

St. Mary's University, as a Catholic and Marianist University, fosters the formation of people in faith and educates leaders for the common good through community, integrated liberal arts and professional education, and academic excellence.

Drawn directly from Catholic and Marianist principles, the mission of St. Mary’s (above) guided the creation of a general education core curriculum that seeks to thoroughly integrate the liberal arts and professional education and that explicitly focuses student and faculty attention upon the formation of the whole person—body, mind, and spirit—for the sake of the common good. In its development, its content, its structure, and in the processes by which it is administered and evaluated, the St. Mary’s Core Curriculum fosters a community of faculty that spans all three of the university’s undergraduate schools and that brings together otherwise disparate disciplines and departments in reflection upon and service to our university’s mission.

In 2004-05, St. Mary’s committed to reexamining and revising its core curriculum. After several years of discernment, a proposed curriculum revision was rejected in large part because it was found lacking in regards to faculty ownership and in explicit connection to the university’s mission. Concerned that any curriculum should be grounded in the faculty’s ownership and should provide clear institutional means to enhance faculty appropriation of curriculum and mission, the university community restarted the curriculum review process.

This new process was designed to reflect—explicitly and thoroughly—the institution’s commitment to faculty ownership of a mission-driven and student-centered curriculum. In 2008, a core curriculum review committee of fifteen faculty members, representing each of the three undergraduate schools
and the Society of Mary (and aided by a dedicated consultation group of fifteen additional members of faculty and staff), began its work by reading and reflecting together upon formative documents in the traditions of Catholic higher education, Marianist higher education, and St. Mary’s own institutional history. The committee’s central question at the outset was “What form of general education is called for by our university’s mission?” Its response, after months of deliberation: “The Core Curriculum at St. Mary’s University has a privileged role in the education of its students in accord with its mission as a liberal arts institution. More than a set of disparate general education requirements, and in distinction (but not separation) from professional, major, and co-curricular education, the Core Curriculum has the specific purpose of explicitly engaging students with the perennial question at the heart of the liberal arts: who are we as human beings?” This curricular vision, along with all meeting minutes, committee readings, and document drafts, were distributed weekly to the faculty at large, and comments and suggestions were solicited and discussed at every stage of the process. In addition, updates were given regularly to the Faculty Senate, where further feedback was sought.

With faculty support, the review committee then turned to developing a robust and unique core curriculum that would serve our students and our mission. As part of the curriculum proposal, the committee stipulated institutional structures and policies that would lay the groundwork for ongoing faculty engagement with and ownership of the curriculum. These included the creation of a standing Core Curriculum Committee (CCC). Comprised of faculty from all three undergraduate schools (and including at least one member of the Faculty Senate), the CCC was charged with overseeing the creation and revision of core courses and structures, facilitating faculty development, evaluation and assessment of the general education curriculum, and coordinating and ensuring integration among core courses. The committee sought to structure the CCC such that it might have the authority and means by which to provide ongoing support for core curriculum development and administration within the guidelines established in the core curriculum proposal, and within the existing administrative structures of the university. Accordingly, the CCC’s formal constitution is as follows:

*The Core Curriculum Committee is an institutional committee of the University. Appointed by the Vice President for Academic Affairs in consultation with the undergraduate Deans, the Core Curriculum Committee shall comprise six faculty members from the three undergraduate schools of the university. The distribution of the Committee among the schools shall be determined by the Vice President for Academic Affairs, who will also designate the Committee’s chair. If possible, given the importance of the Core Curriculum for the mission and identity of the university, a faculty member who is a vowed member of the Society of Mary should be appointed to the Committee. Committee members shall serve a three-year term and should not be appointed to consecutive terms. Appointments to the Committee should be made so that no more than one-third of the membership will be replaced in any given year. A faculty member should have served on the Committee for at least a year prior to appointment to the position of chair. Since the work of this committee will take a significant commitment, members of the Committee will be given a course release during each semester that they serve on this committee. Recommendations from the Committee will be submitted for review and approval by the Academic Council.*

Following several information sessions and a consultative vote of the full faculty, the revised Core Curriculum was approved at all levels, and was adopted by the university’s Board of Trustees. With the full support of the university’s administration, and with assistance and direction from the CCC, the faculty set about designing a sequence of ten new “St. Mary’s Core” (SMC) courses that were to serve as the backbone of the revised core curriculum. Groups of faculty (including tenured, tenure-track, and contingent faculty members) volunteered to develop course descriptions and learning outcomes appropriate to each course, guided by and expressly tied to the newly approved general education goals and learning objectives. Thus, even as the courses were being developed, a provisional curriculum “map”
emerged organically, which allowed the CCC to evaluate the comprehensiveness of the proposed courses and to work with the faculty groups to tailor their course proposals to ensure curricular integrity and cross-course integration.

This collaborative, faculty-driven process required significant investments of time, talent, and patience for all involved. A top-down mandate would have been much more efficient than the multi-faceted back-and-forth process of designing ten courses by ten separate groups of faculty. But because of their involvement of almost 100 faculty members (and many more since), the resulting curriculum stands as a coherent whole, with broad and committed ownership by the faculty, academic support staff, and administration.

We know the core because we created it. We hire for and teach in the core because we know its centrality to the mission. We collaborate across academic disciplines to improve and connect our SMC courses because our faculty and our core are co-constituting. We develop ourselves and new faculty members—both through formal orientations/workshops and through regular meetings of SMC course faculty—because we recognize that our core curriculum works in and through a robust community of mutual challenge and mutual support.

\[1\] The ten-course SMC sequence consists of integrated courses in history, philosophy, social science, natural sciences, theology, ethics, civic engagement, fine arts, literature, and a core capstone. Each of the three undergraduate schools requires additional coursework as part of their “School-Specific Cores.”
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Award Criteria

Criterion 2: Building Ownership through Credentialing and Development Processes
Describe your processes for creating faculty ownership of the general education program. In order to
meet the goals of the general education program, your institution uses what faculty-centric processes to
establish the credentials of general education faculty, grow commitment to and leadership of the general education
program, or enhance instruction? What is the role of adjunct and non-tenure track faculty in these activities?
Address the following issues:

- What processes your institution employs to grow faculty ownership: how it establishes faculty
credentials, develops leadership, orients new faculty, or improves instruction.
- What faculty must do to “earn the right” to teach general education.
- What your institution expects of general education faculty in terms of on-going professional
development, and how these expectations and activities align with faculty-centric goals for
ownership, credentialing, and leadership, and with achievement of student learning goals.
- Who develops these expectations and activities, including the role faculty (full or part-time),
administration, and students play in developing them.
- What forms of institutional support exist for credentialing or development activities.

Please limit your response to two pages. The following text box may be increased in size as necessary.

In the process of creating the new core curriculum, which includes a ten-course sequence of specially
designed interdisciplinary St. Mary’s Core (SMC) courses, the faculty and administration recognized two
things: (1) that for these SMC courses to be truly integrated, significant development of existing faculty
would need to take place, and (2) that we would need to develop strategies for developing incoming
faculty to teach these unique courses and participate in the ongoing formation of the curriculum.

Given the size and complexity of this task, the Core Curriculum Committee (CCC) decided to use the
curriculum’s gradual roll-out as its timeline template. Following the approval of the curriculum in April
2009, we had one year to design the five first-year courses, which were to be offered for the first time in
Fall 2010. The intermediate-level SMC courses were designed in academic year 2010-11 and offered in
Fall 2011, and the senior-level SMC Capstone course was designed in academic year 2011-12 and
offered in Spring 2013. With general course descriptions and curriculum structure already in hand as a
result of the curriculum revision process, we were thus able to stagger our work and focus upon
developing ourselves and one another in anticipation of the emerging courses.

Our process was as follows:
(1) For each course, a group of roughly 10 faculty members was assembled (by a combination of
self-selection, CCC nomination, and nomination by Department Chairs) to draft a detailed course
proposal. In keeping with our institutional culture, these groups included tenured, tenure-track, and
non-tenure-track faculty without distinction, though in the interest of curricular continuity, we ensured
that tenured/tenure-track faculty members comprised at least half of each group.
(2) With the support and guidance of the CCC, these groups created course structures, selected common
texts and assignments where appropriate, and drafted specific course outcomes, explicitly tying them to
the already established curriculum objectives.
(3) Members of the separate course groups met together periodically to compare notes, align course content, and identify areas whereby the separate courses might be integrated and tied together in the classroom.

(4) At the request of several faculty groups, faculty course-building repositories of readings, syllabi, assignments, and other teaching materials were established using the university’s learning management system. Later, recognizing that some of these materials might be helpful for students as well, university librarians assisted in developing public course repositories (called “LibGuides”) that include core texts, supplementary materials, and research guides for students.

(5) Once the course proposals were developed and approved, the CCC assembled a full “curriculum map” which detailed the relationships between course learning outcomes and core curriculum objectives. This “map” was then shared with the various faculty groups, who used it to modify and refine their course outcomes to cover curricular gaps and to better integrate with the other SMC courses.

(6) As approved courses “rolled out,” the groups continued to meet regularly to share pedagogical insights, review assessment data, and further refine their plans for subsequent semesters.

(7) An all-day core curriculum retreat, sponsored by the CCC and the Provost’s Office, was held in May 2012 to bring together all SMC faculty—including those teaching the five first-year and four intermediate-level courses—to review the new curriculum in light of four semesters’ experience in teaching the new courses and the accumulated academic assessment data.

This process of collaborative course development and curricular integration threw into relief the ongoing and cooperative nature of the tasks of building and sustaining our core curriculum. New faculty members needed to be oriented and brought into the curriculum; and existing faculty members requested additional support in continuing their individual and collaborative efforts to teach and improve these unique courses.

In a core-wide debriefing meeting, faculty pointed to the need for a more centralized administration of the practical, day-to-day operations the core, including course scheduling, policy enforcement, record-keeping, and the like. Responding to these concerns, the CCC and the Academic Council appointed a faculty member to a newly created position, Director of the Core Curriculum, which subsumed the role of the CCC Chairperson, integrated the various administrative tasks, and provided a clear institutional locus for core-related dealings. In addition, the Director was tasked with coordinating with the undergraduate Deans in matters of faculty recruitment, faculty orientation, and ongoing faculty development. By providing continuity of leadership and a clear “point person” for general education, the institutional commitment to long-range planning for the faculty and the curriculum became more tangible. That this administrative structure grew gradually and organically out of the implementation process remains one of its chief strengths, particularly with respect to faculty ownership.

Indeed, the faculty’s grassroots call for leadership—and the institution’s deliberate response to that call—has worked to grow the already-present, but somewhat fragile atmosphere of faculty ownership into a robust climate of engagement. One example: the SMC 4301 senior capstone course. After three years of experience developing and teaching the new curriculum, the faculty came together in a daylong retreat to reflect upon the curriculum and to discuss the development of this final SMC course. At the end of a long day, and after several years of shared struggle to create and teach a radically new set of courses, the enthusiasm of our faculty was startling. Volunteers were sought to spend the summer creating a course proposal for this project-based, integrative, non-disciplinary capstone. Over twenty faculty members volunteered, so many that two separate groups had to be created. These interdisciplin ary teams met over the summer and into the fall to propose course focus, structure, and content. After all was said and done, the two formal proposals went forward to the CCC, the Faculty Senate, and then the Academic Council; both were approved and offered the following year. Over the course of that year, the faculty, reflecting together with the aid of academic assessment results, determined that one of the two versions of the course would become the model/template for subsequent semesters. Bringing together their various insights into the course’s structure, focus, and pedagogy, they continue to meet at least twice per semester, revising and
refining the course and helping faculty new to the course to become oriented to its unique content and its project-based format.

Because they emerge from and fit our institutional culture, and because they have worked, the faculty working groups that continue to shape and re-shape SMC courses have organically become a model of faculty-guided mutual development that sustains and enhances our core. At new faculty orientations, incoming full-time (tenure-track and non-tenure-track alike) members of the faculty are formally introduced to the curriculum and invited to join relevant working groups. As very few part-time instructors are assigned to teach SMC courses, their initial orientation has been accomplished through one-on-one meetings with the Director of the Core, followed by invitations to full membership in the relevant courses' working groups.
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Criterion 3: Evaluating Faculty Ownership Processes
Describe your methods for assessing faculty ownership of the general education curriculum, including its credentialing or development activities and their impact on faculty and on student learning. Address the following issues:
- How your goals for faculty ownership are assessed, including the role faculty play in the evaluation of credentialing or professional development activities
- What methods are used to gather and analyze the results
- Who evaluates the results and how those results are shared
- What the results reveal about the impact of credentialing or professional development activities on faculty
- What the results reveal about the impact of credentialing or professional development activities on student learning
- How the institution communicates the results of its evaluation processes

Please limit your response to two pages. The following text box may be increased in size as necessary.

The Core Curriculum Committee and the ten faculty working groups are the chief means for faculty direction of the curriculum and for faculty ownership of professional development activities related to general education. Accordingly, evaluation of faculty ownership requires assessment of the degree and quality of faculty engagement with these groups and the extent to which the curriculum itself actually reflects the university's mission.

Degree of Faculty Engagement
Formation of faculty working groups began in 2009-2010 in preparation for the roll-out of the newly approved core curriculum in Fall 2010. Faculty members chose to join these groups by self-selection and by nomination/encouragement from their respective department chairs and deans, though membership was and remains open to any interested members of the faculty. As a result of the groups' early successes in proposing, planning, and reviewing SMC course content and pedagogy, and because of the strong sense of community and shared responsibility that formed among the members, all of the groups elected to continue their work beyond the pre-implementation period. Since that time, the groups have grown significantly, welcoming in new faculty members who are teaching (or considering teaching) the respective courses. The chart below (Figure 1) shows the growth of working group membership in the four years since the new curriculum was approved.

Consonant with the institutional culture at St. Mary's, our faculty working group membership includes tenured, tenure-track, and non-tenure track members without distinction. (In 2014, the faculty group membership breakdown by status and rank is as follows: 57% Tenured/Tenure-track; 27% Full-time, non-tenure-track; 16% Part-time, non-tenure-track.) All three of the university's undergraduate schools are represented in the faculty groups as well.
The Core Curriculum Committee (CCC) was formed to manage the implementation process and facilitate initial faculty development and academic assessment in general education. In the year preceding initial SMC course offerings (2009-2010), this committee worked tirelessly with the faculty groups, the Faculty Senate, registrar and advising offices, department chairs, and the academic deans to create new general education policies, facilitate degree program alignment with the new curriculum, and shepherd course proposals through the review process. This work continued into the 2010-2011 academic year, as intermediate-level SMC courses were developed, at which point the committee turned its attention to developing a full general education assessment plan, which was piloted in 2011-2012 and implemented in full in 2012-2013. In addition to their formal deliberative and legislative functions, members of the CCC serve as touchstones in their respective Schools, facilitating communication to faculty and deans and gathering insights and information to bring back to the committee. They are frequently asked to serve on faculty hiring committees and faculty review committees within their schools, as they bring with them a special concern for the quality and integrity of our general education curriculum.

Quality and Integrity of the Curriculum
With over 160 faculty members participating in faculty working groups and 14 different faculty members serving terms on the Core Curriculum Committee, the past five years have seen substantial faculty involvement in core-related faculty engagement. The quality of this engagement remains high, as evidenced by the success of our new core curriculum. Because of the profound and far-reaching faculty engagement in curricular design and pedagogy, the core courses—each individually and taken together as an integrated whole—explicitly reflect and advance our university’s mission. Extracted from three randomly selected core capstone (SMC 4301) reflection papers in 2013-2014, the following serve as student testimonials to the success of the faculty’s efforts in this regard:
The mission statement of St. Mary's University derives from the characteristics of Marianist universities. As a Catholic and Marianist Liberal Arts Institution, the core classes required at St. Mary's University collectively share this theme of academic excellence through faith, service, and justice. Each core class individually elaborates on different and certain aspects of the Marianist characteristics and I think each serves an integral and vital part of the education you receive as a whole.

Marianist education promotes a deeper understanding of why we are being taught the things that we are being taught, not by “filling our brains with information” but with developing our intellectual capabilities through open discussion and peer advancing. I cannot confidently state that any one SMC course directly influences this Marianist characteristic. To provide an excellent education we as students need to be well versed in all nine of the core classes.

The thing I have learned about St. Mary's is that they are not afraid if change. They are not set in stone [that] this is the way it must be done; they take opinions from students and staff and actually use that information to help better the program.
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Criterion 4: Planning Improvements for Faculty Ownership
Describe your institution’s plans to use its data to mature its faculty ownership processes. Address the
following issues:
- What new goals (if any) for faculty ownership/development followed from the evaluation
- What data-driven faculty ownership improvement projects your institution selected or is planning
- Who collaborated to identify and plan the improvements
- What level of institutional support exists for the improvement projects
- What plans exist to follow up on targeted improvement projects to check for improved faculty
  ownership and leadership
- What results have been collected following the improvement efforts (if they have been collected
during a second or later cycle of review)
- What lessons were learned from the improvement process

Please limit your response to two pages. The following text box may be increased in size as necessary.

Sustaining and improving faculty ownership of the curriculum requires (a) recognition of faculty
leadership efforts; (b) ongoing, systematic collection and communication of data needed for informed
faculty decision-making; and (c) institutional responsiveness to faculty-driven proposals. Though our
efforts are far from complete, in the five years following approval of the new curriculum St. Mary’s
University has made great strides in improving each of these elements of faculty ownership.

Recognition of Faculty Leadership Efforts
With the exception of the Core Curriculum Director and the members of the Core Curriculum Committee
(CCC), most of the faculty members involved in the planning and ongoing development of SMC courses
have done so without compensation or formal recognition for these efforts. Though St. Mary’s prides
itself on a culture of service, and though the faculty members involved did so out of a genuine sense of
ownership and shared commitment to the mission and our students, we recognized that sustaining this
strong sense of faculty ownership requires a significant—and public—recognition of the value of faculty
members’ contributions. As such, the CCC has recently proposed the creation of a “Faculty of the St.
Mary’s Core” to formally recognize active membership in core teaching and ongoing development (esp.
for purposes of tenure and promotion), to institutionalize the already extant community of mutual support
and discernment, and to provide a locus for an annual faculty award for “excellence in teaching and
service within the St. Mary’s Core.” This proposal is currently under review by the Academic Council.
Finally, owing to their significant contributions to the core, six members of the CCC have been
honored with the Distinguished Faculty Award and/or the President’s Award for Excellence since 2010.

Data Collection and Communication Processes
The collection and processing of academic assessment data under the previous core curriculum had fallen
to the individual academic departments whose disciplinary courses were included in the previous core’s
various distribution requirements. With the creation of a truly interdisciplinary set of courses, the new
curriculum clearly required a new assessment strategy. The CCC’s first task was to develop and routinize the means for collecting student work products from SMC courses, without undue intrusion into the pedagogy of instructors’ classes, and without overburdening instructors with additional duties. We had few models for such large-scale collection of work, given the uniqueness of our curriculum and the sheer number of faculty from across the university who teach SMC courses each semester. The need for an institutional “home” for the core became apparent to all involved, and it was at this point that the core’s faculty met together and called for increased centralization of core-related administrative tasks. The CCC, working with the undergraduate Deans and the Provost, created the office of Core Curriculum Director, locating therein the bulk of the administrative responsibility for the SMC. This allowed the routinization of data collection and dissemination efforts, and provided a measure of organizational clarity and consistency in other administrative matters related to SMC courses—e.g. class scheduling, handling of student issues, policy compliance, and the like.

At present, all core-related communication is accomplished by email or by postings to course-specific LMS sites. As both platforms suffer from significant limitations, faculty have requested broadened and streamlined access to SMC course materials and assessment reports to better inform their course-specific development and to better integrate the content and pedagogy across SMC courses. As such, enhanced communication has become a central goal for the core. After multiple consultations with on-campus experts in the Office of Information Technology Services, the Core Curriculum Director has begun to set up a SharePoint repository to hold assessment reports and where faculty can post and retrieve syllabi, course readings, assignment handouts, bibliographies, and other course-related materials. We plan to launch the new repository within the year, provide training for faculty in using it, and will survey faculty users to solicit feedback and suggestions for further improvement in content and ease of use.

Institutional Support for Faculty Ownership

The university has made a real and public commitment to core curriculum development. In creating the most recent strategic plan, the university’s administration and Board of Trustees recognized the centrality of the core curriculum to the institution’s mission. As such, the strategic plan includes the following objective: “Strengthen and develop commitment to liberal arts as core to all undergraduate majors, including centrality of St. Mary’s Core Curriculum. Develop additional resources to enhance the overall excellence of the liberal arts.” As a result of faculty requests for enhanced support for faculty development, the strategic plan includes the goal of creating a Center for Teaching and Learning Excellence. Further, in conjunction with our recent accreditation reaffirmation efforts (and in direct response to a thorough formal consultation with faculty across the university), a committee of faculty, staff, and students submitted a detailed Quality Enhancement Plan that centers on creating a highly structured series of faculty development workshops for enhancing instruction in written and oral communication. Plans for evaluating the success of each of these initiatives are still underway, and shall serve both external (i.e. accreditation and Board of Trustees) and internal (i.e. faculty and curricular development) purposes.

Lesson Learned

The most salient lessons learned are as follows:

(1) Faculty ownership requires empowerment, not mere mandate. Institutional structures and processes should be flexible enough to be repurposed, revised, or created afresh with faculty ownership as a central goal and as the driving force.

(2) General education ought to clearly reflect the institution’s unique mission. Faculty ownership therefore requires shared understanding of the mission and the curriculum’s role in it. Formation/orientation of faculty members and ongoing communal reflection are crucial.

(3) And a great deal of patience is required in the decision-making process, particularly for general education, in which reasonable consensus must be sought whenever possible. Multiple back-and-forth
consultations at multiple levels and with the widest range of stakeholders takes time, but students' experience of a curriculum is directly affected by the faculty's sense of engagement/ownership of the courses they teach. If the faculty does not believe in the curriculum, the courses and the students will suffer.

4) Infrastructure, particularly assessment and communication systems, will likely require modification from standard discipline-centric models. Doing these modifications well requires working closely with faculty members, soliciting their insights and feedback throughout the planning and implementation process.

5) Major general education revision should be followed by at least a year or two of implementation preparation before full rollout. We were fortunate that our 'tiered' curriculum structure allowed us to stagger our rollout processes.
Evaluation Rubric

2014 AGLS Awards for Improving General Education: Exemplary Program Processes
Developing Faculty Ownership

**Introduction:** As indicated in the application, the AGLS Awards for Improving General Education are intended to recognize institutions committed to the principles and practices described in the AGLS Guide. The general evaluation descriptions below reflect the assumption that the Awards are intended to serve as models of how to achieve innovative reform, enhanced learning, strong leadership, and institutional commitment to on-going, evidence-based improvement. Preference will be given to programs that are fully developed and implemented with an improvement cycle; these are programs that develop and provide faculty ownership activities, check the impact, and consider improvements.

**Criterion #1: Supporting Faculty Ownership of General Education**

**Excellent Model (5):** Overall, a useful description of how an institution and its leadership can demonstrate that it places a high value on faculty ownership of the gen. ed. program and effective instruction intended to achieve the program goals. The application clearly describes commitment to and communication about its commitment to achieving its mission and gen. ed. goals through its processes for establishing faculty credentials, increasing leadership, orienting new faculty, or improving general education instruction. The app. spells out a collaborative and systematic process for determining the expectations for faculty ownership of and leadership of the general education program, and it offers meaningful and practical suggestions on how key individuals and documents can clearly articulate the institution’s values or preferences for faculty commitment to the goals of the program and the practices that will achieve those goals. These preferences are closely tied to a communicated commitment to improving the student general education experience, and the app. includes a discussion of how all faculty (including adjunct or non-tenure track faculty) are included in the processes.

**Acceptable Model (3):** Overall, the app. presents a mission/goals-related context for valuing faculty ownership as reflected in the key processes described, but the narrative gives limited discussion of the breadth of the commitment or the quality of the communication of the commitment. There might be questions about the support simply because the effort or program is new and in early stages of development or because the app. fails to fully describe the support. App. identifies who makes decisions regarding faculty expectations for ownership and instruction, but these processes might not be collaborative or the app. leaves questions about the effectiveness of the process as a model. The processes communicate a commitment to student outcomes. The app. offers some beneficial information about how to include adjunct/non-tenure track faculty in the process.

**Developing Model (1):** Application shows a commitment of some gen. ed. “heroes” but fails to clearly show an institutional commitment to faculty ownership and improvement processes, or it fails to show how key individuals and documents clearly communicate commitment and full support. The processes for determining expectations for faculty ownership/leadership and for quality instruction are either poorly described or lack a systematic structure, and thus may not reflect a sustainable process. The app. does not address adjunct/non-tenure track issues.

**Criterion #2: Building Ownership through Credentialing and Development Processes**

**Excellent Model (5):** Overall, the application offers fresh insights into a process for increasing faculty ownership of the general education program and its goals. App. clearly describes an effective, systematic, collegial method that might be used by other institutions to establish faculty credentials, develop leadership, orient new faculty or improve instruction. The process used by faculty to “earn the right” to teach in the program includes clear measures of success or completion, and it ensures ownership of and commitment to the goals of the program and quality instruction. App. details a creative and effective
model of providing professional development that is recognized as a priority; evidence suggests that sufficient human and financial resources exist to sustain the program in order to achieve its goals for developing general education ownership/leadership and quality instruction. App. describes how adjunct and non-tenure track faculty benefit from these development/ownership activities.

**Acceptable Model (3):** Overall, the app. addresses all the questions and offers some insights into processes that enhance program ownership, but questions exist about how effective some processes are or how applicable they will be for others, maybe because the program is relatively new. App. describes how faculty are selected or credentialed or “earn the right” to teach in the general education program, but it may be unclear how the processes align with the program goals or how successful the process will be in achieving its goals for growing ownership or improving instruction. The expectations for on-going professional development are clear, but questions might exist regarding effectiveness or sustainability of the expectations. The process for determining expectations for continued development exists, but there might be limited evidence of the plan being collaboratively developed or systematically planned to accomplish its goals. The institution offers some human and financial resources to sustain its ownership efforts, but it might be unclear as to whether the resources are sufficient or it is unclear how the expectations will accomplish the goals for ownership. Adjunct and non-tenure track faculty are offered opportunities, but the description offers no creative solution for engaging them in the processes or leaves open to question whether the program can accomplish its ownership and instruction goals for this group.

**Developing Model (1):** Overall, the app. fails to clearly describe its processes for growing ownership or the process descriptions offer limited insight into how to accomplish the goal of growing ownership or achieving the goals of the program. The means by which faculty “earn the right” to teach and/or the professional development expectations of the institution might be unclear or not clearly connected to the goals for student learning. It’s not clear who developed the expectations or the expectations are not clearly aligned with program goals. The faculty development plan does not appear sustainable or effectively designed to build ownership and leadership skills or effectively move instruction away from teacher-centric practices. The plan described is not a comprehensive plan for all faculty, whether tenured or adjunct/non-tenure track.

**Criterion #3: Evaluating Faculty Ownership Processes**

**Excellent Model (5):** Overall, the evaluation model is simple but effective, and it can and should be considered by others. The processes used to collect and evaluate evidence on the impact of faculty development activities are clear, replicable, and effective for identifying the importance and value of credentialing methods, ownership/leadership development activities or enhanced instructional activities. Individuals taking responsibility for the collection and evaluation process and the methods used are clear and appear to be effective for gathering the information that can be used to establish the effectiveness of the ownership/development activities and identify improvements that might be needed. The evaluation results give strong evidence of the effectiveness of the ownership/development activities, and show positive gains in faculty ownership, student learning, and achieving the goals of the gen. ed. program. The results are shared with all key stakeholders, including those who will use them to strengthen the program and make improvement decisions.

**Acceptable Model (3):** Overall, the app. describes processes that are producing some evidence of successful ownership activities. The processes used to collect and evaluate the impact of faculty ownership/development activities are identified, but more detail is needed to clarify the process, or the methods seem overly complicated for the results produced, or the results might raise questions about goals achievement. Responsible individuals and all other participants are described. The evaluation results give evidence of the benefits of the faculty development activities and potential for improvement, though some of the evidence for ownership/development or the impact on student learning is limited. The
evidence is shared with key stakeholders, but the plan for collaborative discussion and use of the results is limited.

Developing Model (1): The processes used to collect and evaluate the impact of faculty ownership/development activities are unclear, or they leave questions about their effectiveness in terms of producing meaningful and useful data about the impact of the activities, or they do not clearly connect to the goals of the program. The details about the actual collection, sharing, and evaluation processes, including who takes responsibility for the process, suggest the process is unsystematic or underdeveloped. The results suggest limited impact of the faculty ownership/development activities, especially regarding student learning, or they do not lend themselves to specific improvement plans, or, while the results are positive, they reflect a questionable or small sample of faculty, or a questionable or small sample of the impact on student learning. Results are shared but not broadly or there appears to be no focus on using them to identify improvements to the faculty development processes.

Criterion #4: Planning Improvements for Faculty Ownership
Excellent Model (5): Overall, the app. details improvements that will help other institutions more quickly and effectively establish ownership/development programs and show other institutions what is meant by a full-loop of assessment. The app. describes plans for goals and/or improvement projects that sensibly follow from the results collected. The improvement plans fit with the current plan and should strengthen the ownership of the program. The plans should be effective because of the broad support in developing the new plans, including institutional support. The plans will positively affect or increase the effectiveness of current activities because they consider all general education faculty, including adjunct/non-tenure track faculty. Plans for checking improvements are clear and measurable, and plans for who will check what and when improvements will be checked are in place or they are in use and producing results. An excellent summary of lessons learned that will help and encourage others to start similar programs.

Acceptable Model (3): Overall, the app. shows an institution moving towards a process of using data to improve its ownership programs. The app. describes the plans for improving goals or activities, though some improvements might not clearly follow from the data collected or the plans might not lead to gains in ownership that the institution is hoping to achieve. The plans for improvements might have good potential, but might reflect limited collaboration or limited institutional support. While the app describes a process that has merit, it has not reached a stage where improvements are being checked, or the plans might not consider improvements for all faculty. Plans for checking future improvements are in place, though there might be some questions about specific details, like who will collect or when. The summary of lessons learned is complete with some important considerations for others.

Developing Model (1): Application describes improvement goals or projects, but the plans are of questionable merit. How the improvement projects will be accomplished is not well-detailed, or the level of support, of any kind, is unclear. Questions about methods and/or outcomes should have been asked, but weren’t. The plans for follow-up checks on the improvements are unclear. Lessons learned are of limited value to others. Overall, the application either fails to describe a closing of the loop, or it closes the loop, but leaves too many unanswered questions throughout the full process.