UNIVERSITY MISSION:
Concordia University Wisconsin is a Lutheran higher education community committed to helping students develop in mind, body and spirit for service to Christ in the Church and in the World.

CORE PROGRAM PURPOSE STATEMENT:
The Core Curriculum lies at the heart of a Concordia education. Built on our mission, it is designed to help students develop habits of the mind, body, and spirit that are rooted in an understanding of the liberal arts. The Core Curriculum lays a foundation of knowledge and skills necessary for a successful life in the 21st century. It comprises six student learning areas essential to a well-educated person: Christian Faith, Communication, Problem Solving, Health and Wellness, Aesthetic Sensibility and Global Citizenship.

The Concordia Core Curriculum assures broad exposure to important ideas and ethical principles, the acquisition of communication and problem solving skills, and the exploration of truth, vocation, and servant leadership within the Christian, Lutheran tradition.

STEP A: GOALS

Program Outcome 1: Christian Faith
The student will:
1a. grow in understanding the Bible.
1b. classify biblical teachings into a coherent body of Christian doctrine.
1c. apply biblical teachings to contemporary and historical contexts.

Program Outcome 2: Communication [ETS Writing Scale]
The student will:
2a. write clearly and cogently, using correct grammar and the appropriate reference or citation style.
2b. utilize various media effectively (including images, technology, print, etc.) for a variety of purposes and audiences.
2c. speak to a variety of audiences intelligently, substantively, and confidently.
2d. communicate interpersonally.
2e. work collaboratively with others.

Program Outcome 3: Problem Solving [ETS Reading/Critical Thinking Scale]
The student will:
3a. identify a problem and to restate it clearly and succinctly.
3b. frame a problem within a particular academic discipline, including, but not limited to, History, Literature, Mathematics, Computer Science, Philosophy, Political Science, Psychology, and Science.
3c. analyze a problem and conduct research leading to information regarding the background of and potential solutions to the problem.
3d. propose and select solution strategies, which may include, but are not limited to, logical/rational, numeric, and/or scientific. [ETS Mathematics & Natural Sciences Scales]
3e. evaluate potential solutions and propose one’s own solutions.

Program Outcome 4: Health and Wellness
The student will:
4a. understand the principles of physical wellness.
4b. utilize skills for lifelong physical wellness.
4c. value and appreciate that our Bodies are God’s Temple.
4d. integrate mind, body and spirit into a healthy lifestyle.

Program Outcome 5: Aesthetic Sensibility [ETS Humanities Scale]
The student will:
5a. develop an individual perception of beauty through experience, reflection and response.
5b. develop knowledge of the formal elements of a work of art, music or piece of literature (i.e., plot, character, dialogue, line, color, shape, texture, dynamics, etc.)
5c. identify and describe messages, moods, tones, voices, and contents communicated by a work of art, music or piece of literature.
5d. describe the historical culture of context that a work of art, music or piece of literature reflects, by identifying its characteristics of time and place, political or social setting, and literary or cultural convention.
5e. evaluate the differences between long-term greatness and popular success, critical success, artistic success, personal expression, and private satisfaction.

Program Outcome 6: Global Citizenship [ETS Social Sciences Scale]
The student will:
6a. identify terms, concepts and histories that explain political, social and economic systems in the United States and globally.
6b. develop cultural understanding, which constitutes an awareness and appreciation of, and sensitivity toward, the similarities and differences of individuals, groups, and societies and/or languages.
6c. embrace opportunities and obligations and apply cultural understanding to function as a citizen in a complex world.

Assessment Tools

ETS Academic Profile

Brief History
Beginning in Fall 2001 the ETS Academic Profile was used to assess the Core curriculum and was administered to 85 incoming first-year students. Since that time the Assessment Committee, in collaboration with the School of Arts & Sciences, has modified the assessment of the Core curriculum to better meet the needs of the university. In Spring 2004 the Academic Profile was administered within the context of senior seminar courses. In Spring 2006 online administration began. During the 2006 – 2007 academic year the MAPP test was mandatory for all graduating seniors. In the last few years, the Proficiency Profile has administered to approximately 100 randomly selected first-year students during the Fall semester and approximately 100 randomly selected junior students during the spring semester. Because enforcing student participation was becoming an increasing problem, new recruitment techniques were explored this (as detailed below). Despite the changes to the assessment’s name, it continues to measure the same set of skills and can be compared across administrations. For a more detailed history of the Core curriculum assessment the reader is encouraged to refer to previous reports.

Measure
The ETS Proficiency Profile measures proficiency in critical thinking, reading, writing and mathematics in the context of material from the humanities, social sciences and natural sciences. The test assesses academic skills developed in general education courses, rather than specific subject knowledge taught.
Results from the assessment measure can be used to assess student proficiency in core academic skill areas to identify strengths, weaknesses and opportunities to improve curriculum and instruction, to compare performance against peer institutions and/or to conduct cross-sectional or longitudinal analyses of learning outcomes. This data will inform decisions made about the Core curriculum.

The ETS Proficiency Profile offers a total score, four skill subscores (critical thinking, reading, writing and mathematics), three context based scores (humanities, social sciences and natural sciences) as well as criterion-referenced scores for proficiency levels within three skill areas. Comparative data for peer institutions are also provided.

The first skill area is Reading/Critical Thinking, it will be briefly described. Performance at level I, the lowest level, is described as recognizing facts and understanding word meanings and phrases. At level II students can identify the main idea, interpret figurative language, synthesize material and identify accurate summaries. At level III (critical thinking) students are able to evaluate competing causal explanations, determine relevance of information to an argument, identify salient themes and evaluate data for consistency with hypotheses.

The next skill area is Writing Skills, it will be briefly described. Performance at level I includes recognizing agreement among basic grammatical elements, recognizing transition words and ordering sentences or elements in an outline. At level II students can incorporate new material into a passage, combine simple clauses into more complex combinations and recast existing sentences into new syntactic combinations. At level III students are able to recognize redundancy, appropriately utilize parallelism and idiomatic language and recognize the most effective revision of a sentence.

The last skill area is Mathematics, it will briefly be described. Performance at level I involves solving word problems using arithmetic, solving problems using informal properties of numbers, square roots, simple algebraic equations and finding numbers from a graph. At level II students can solve problems involving sets, interpret a trend in a graph, simplify algebraic expressions and solve arithmetic problems with some complications. At level III students are able to solve problems that require insight or logical reasoning, generalize about numbers, understand properties of integers, exponents and roots other than square roots.

After evaluating test content it was determined that four of the six Core curriculum program outcomes could be linked to the ETS Proficiency Profile scales [as denoted above]. Concordia University – Wisconsin faculty members wrote 31 supplemental questions that originally addressed the previous student learning outcomes, but can be linked to the remaining two program outcomes – Christian Faith and Health and Wellness, as well as Aesthetic Sensibility and Global Citizenship.

Validity is described as the accuracy of a measure. Construct validity is the extent to which a measure accurately taps into the underlying traits or skills of a particular construct. ETS’s Center for Validity Research (2007) reports the Proficiency Profile’s (formerly named the MAPP) construct validity by pointing to studies conducted on the Academic Profile. Marr (1995) found that higher test scores were explained by completion of more core curriculum courses. A study ETS conducted in 1990 revealed test scores were positively correlated to grade point average, class standing and core curriculum completion. ETS suggests these results indicate the Proficiency Profile’s construct validity. Along with further assessment of construct validity, evaluations of content and predictive validity will also be assessed by ETS as they acquire more institutional data. Reliability, or a measure’s consistency, was not reported on ETS’s official website (www.ets.org).
Procedure
The Proficiency Profile Abbreviated Form (36 items, 40 minutes) was administered to students, along with the 31 faculty generated supplemental questions. Incoming freshmen were tested during Academic Orientation for traditional students on Saturday morning before the start of classes. During part of the orientation time, students were randomly divided into 8 groups; during each of two sessions, 4 groups participated in an introduction to academic resources at CUW, while the other 4 went to various other activities. Of these 4, two groups came to the computer labs in HS 108 and St 107 for ETS testing, proctored by A&S staff. This means that over the course of 1.5 hours, we tested approximately half of the incoming class that participated in orientation.

In the spring, the test was administered through the capstone course in Business, as well as the Senior Seminar courses in English, History, Psychology and Political Science within the School of Arts & Sciences. The instructors of the Business course elected to have the test administered during the class time in the various sections over several days. This ensured that all students took the test. The four senior seminar classes piloted a process by which students were informed of the testing as a course requirement, and then given a range of testing times and contact information for signing up. All tests were proctored by A&S staff, and completion notices were sent to course instructors for the Senior Seminar students.

Results

Descriptive Statistics
Fall 2014 – First-Year Students (N = 98)

Entering Freshman: 86
Fewer than 30 credits: 5
30-60 credits: 4
61-90 credits: 2
90+ credits: 1

Age
< 20: 91
20-29: 7

Sex
Female: 69
Male: 24

Ethnicity
African American: 0
Asian American or Pacific Islander: 0
Hispanic/Latino: 3
Native American: 0
White: 92
Other/Decline: 1

Enrollment Status
Full-time: 97
Part-time: 1

Transfer Hours
Not a Transfer: 89
0 – 15 hours: 2
16 – 30 hours: 3
30+ hours: 4

Weekly Hours Worked
Not Employed: 29
1 – 15: 42
16 – 30: 21
30+: 6

Best Language
English: 71
Other: 26
English & Other: 1

Core Requirements Completed
None: 85
About 25%: 6

GPA
None Yet: 65
3.50-4.00: 16
About 50%: 3
About 75%: 3
100%: 1

3.00-3.49: 14
2.50-2.99: 3
2.00-2.49: 0
Below 2.0: 0

Major
Accounting: 1
Art & Art History: 1
Banking/Finance: 1
Biological Sciences: 4
Business Administration: 9
Chemistry: 7
Communications: 1
Computer & Information Sciences: 2
Criminal Justice: 2
Education: 11

Spring 2015 – Senior Students (N = 96)

Entering Freshman: 6
Fewer than 30 credits: 0
30-60 credits: 0
61-90 credits: 0
90+ credits: 64

Age
< 20: 7
20-29: 89

Sex
Female: 42
Male: 49

Ethnicity
African American: 0
Asian American or Pacific Islander: 3
Hispanic/Latino: 2
Native American: 0
White: 86
Other/Decline: 3

Enrollment Status
Full-time: 92
Part-time: 4

Weekly Hours Worked
Not Employed: 13
1 – 15: 29
16 – 30: 38
30+: 16

Transfer Hours
Not a Transfer: 74
0 – 15 hours: 8
16 – 30 hours: 5
30+ hours: 9

Best Language
English: 71
Other: 22
English & Other: 3

Core Requirements Completed
None: 8
About 25%: 35
About 50%: 53
About 75%: 3

GPA
None Yet: 6
3.50-4.00: 36
3.00-3.49: 29
2.50-2.99: 22
2.00-2.49: 3
Below 2.0: 0

Engineering: 1
Health & Medical Sciences: 31
Mathematics: 1
Music: 3
Psychology: 3
Religion & Theology: 1
Social Work: 3
Undecided: 4
Other: 11
### Core Curriculum 2014-15

#### Major
- Accounting: 6
- Banking/Finance: 11
- Biological Sciences: 1
- Business Administration: 22
- Marketing: 17
- Chemistry: 4
- Communications: 1
- Criminal Justice: 4
- Economics: 3
- Education: 4
- English: 4
- Environmental Sciences: 1
- Health & Medical Sciences: 14
- History: 1
- Music: 1
- Political Science: 1
- Psychology: 14
- Undecided: 6
- Other: 10

#### Mean Scale Scores

<table>
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<th>First-Year Students (CUW Fall 2014)</th>
<th>Senior Students (CUW Spring 2015)</th>
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<tr>
<td>Institutional Total Score</td>
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<td>Reading</td>
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<td>Writing</td>
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#### Proficiency Data

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<th>First-Year Students (CUW Fall 2014)</th>
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<th>Seniors (CUW Spring 2015)</th>
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Conclusions & Recommendations

The data on the incoming freshmen for the 2014-15 school year may be the first truly accurate picture provided by the ETS test of our students upon entering the institution. As opposed to past years where recruitment was either done by random sampling, but hard to enforce, or done through a highly incentivized process, this year’s sample involved very little self-selection on the part of the students participating, except that we were limited to those who came to the orientation. Test results show a student population that is at or slightly above average in the various test areas, with an overall institutional percentile score of 67th. The highest numbers came in writing and math, each in the 71st percentile nationally, and the lowest scores were in reading and the humanities, in the 54th and 51st percentiles, respectively. Although these numbers represent more accurately reflect the competencies of a representative sample of the student population than previous sampling procedures, the numbers reflect very similar trends from previous years. Students recruited and enrolled by Concordia as a whole have pronounced strengths in math and natural sciences, but lag behind slightly in areas related to the humanities. These numbers provide several possible paths in the ongoing ULAO and Core Curriculum discussions.

The percentile numbers are markedly lower among the population of seniors tested this year. The highest ranking was 64th percentile in mathematics, while the scores for humanities, social sciences, and reading were all below the 30th percentile, and critical thinking was only in the 31st percentile. While the scores show some amount of increase in the proficiency numbers between students beginning and completing their education at CUW, the percentile scores indicate a significant drop in standing compared to students at peer institutions nationally. We may attribute some of this to the fact that 67% of those tested were business students, thus representing a student population within a narrow curricular track that doesn’t emphasize skills in some of the lower performance areas. However, these do indicate a deficiency either in the initial delivery of this material within the Core, or its reinforcement in the major programs.

While the numbers from this year’s testing, as well as previous years’ scores, can provide some guidance in evaluating the Core, the data provided paints in very broad strokes that make correlation to the current (and presumably future) Core SLOs very difficult. Furthermore, the Orientation Committee has expressed that they are not in favor of continuing testing during Freshman Orientation, which takes away the one sampling procedure that has proved successful so far. In consultation with the Director of Institutional Research, I therefore recommend suspending the ETS testing for a period of at least two years. In its place, assessment efforts and energy can focus on developing direct assessment measures based on student artifacts produced in courses across the Core Curriculum. These efforts will focus initially on the five Common Core Courses: REL 100, REL 110, ENG 103, ENG 104, and HIST 103. As of this year three of these courses have functional, embedded, direct assessment tools in place, while the other two have plans to implement something and provide data during the coming academic year (see below). The newly-created Department of
Philosophy similarly collects data on its Core courses, which is a start on the next phase of the project—identifying and developing tools within courses across the Core Curriculum.

Depending on the data generated by these tools, there may be a need for a summative tool or measure to evaluate student learning at the end of their undergraduate career. Beginning this year, the Department of History is piloting a new process by which they will use an electronic portfolio system. They will be attempting adapt the same portfolio program used by the School of Education to a non-professional program. If they find this successful, it may have application to a the wider student population in a variety of programs, including the Core. This would give students the opportunity for regular self-reflection on their learning, as well as allow us to better gauge student development over the course of both Core and program curricula.
DIRECT ASSESSMENT MEASURES FOR THE COMMON CORE

THEOLOGY

PROCESS
The Theology Department has been assessing the effectiveness of their classes in the Core Curriculum for many years. As primary artifacts from the Core Theology courses (REL 100 and REL 110 for most students, and REL 201, REL 203, and REL 204 for church work majors), instructors within the department track the results of pre- and post-tests administered in each class. The department also examines student artifacts and scores from the classes included as possible Theology electives in the Core on a rotating basis (this year, they analyzed results from REL 333: A Survey of Christian thought). This provides detailed longitudinal data for the classes in the Common Core, as well as a regular spot check on the range of courses contained in the Narrative section of the current Core structure, to create an integrative picture of the sequence(s) of classes.

RESULTS
The Theology Department’s assessment is keyed to their five program SLOs, which proceed from the most foundational to outcomes related to complex, discipline-specific research. The Core classes address the first three SLOs, being Scripture, Doctrine, and Church History. Each of these broad areas contains specifically nominated criteria (observable knowledge, skills, and attitudes), which, in turn, directly address the Core SLO’s related to Christian Faith in Section 1 (1a, 1b, and 1c, respectively). The basic benchmark for each of these SLO criteria is a 10-20% average increase between the pre- and post-test scores related to each item. Internally, the department evaluates the scores of each individual instructor and addresses patterns when necessary. On a larger scale, composite scores from each campus are examined, and the department recommends minor curricular changes within specific classes to correct for scores below the target range (see the attached Core Theology report).

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS
The Theology department is doing a model job of measuring course effectiveness and providing ongoing recommendations and adjustments to the curriculum within its classes. The results suggest no need for larger curricular changes at the Core level at this time, but the department’s longitudinal data will prove extremely valuable in demonstrating the effectiveness and the need for the these courses during the ongoing discussion of the Core Curriculum.

ENGLISH
The two Core classes in the English Department are less sequenced than those in Theology, and so merit assessment and consideration separately.

ENG 104
The English Department has been in the process of producing a common rubric for evaluating the final research papers in ENG 104: Introduction to Writing that will both benefit the department in setting and
evaluating outcomes for classes taught by a large number of faculty (both full-time and adjunct), as well as demonstrate the course’s performance in regards to the Core Curriculum SLOs.

The faculty heavily involved with teaching English 104: Introduction to Writing contributed input on a common rubric in various ways over the course of last year. Initially, we asked for copies of rubrics currently in use in the class, both for the final project and for other major writing assignments. Instructors were also encouraged to provide insight on how they constructed the rubric that they use, what they find effective for grading and feedback, and what they find ineffective.

During the 2014-15 academic year, all faculty teaching English 104 used the new rubric to evaluate and grade the final research projects that students wrote for the class. During the fall, instructors were asked to evaluate how closely the rubrics result matched the grading process they had used previously.

RESULTS

In terms of the rubric’s usefulness as a tool, several instructors noted during the fall semester that the rubric produced lower grades (by as much as 10%, or a full letter grade) than previous forms of grading. This seemed to be partly a matter of point distribution among the 6 traits evaluated, but mostly due to the criteria assigned to point values within each of those traits. The department made minor revisions to the rubric between fall and spring semesters, and the revised tool better matched the established grading standards.

At the end of the spring semester, 99 papers and grading rubrics were collected from 6 instructors in English 104. The average paper score was 81.6%. The more interesting numbers, however, came from percentage averages for each of the 6 evaluated traits/skills:

- Thesis and idea (3a): 86.4%
- Research and Audience (3b, 2c): 84.3%
- Argument Development (3b, 3c): 84.8%
- Structure and Organization: 81.7%
- Language, Style, and Mechanics (2a): 73.6%
- Proper MLA format (2a): 78.5%

CONCLUSIONS

With a target average being 75%, based on a C representing average work, the 81.6% is slightly high. The first caveat to this interpretation is that the papers under examination represent the students’ final artifacts for the course, so we would expect to see their best work at the end of a semester.

Moreover, in the individual scores, there is a marked difference between the percentages for the first three categories and those for the remaining categories. “Thesis,” “Research/Audience” and “Development” all have scores in the mid- to –upper 80s (a high B range), while “Organization,” “Style/Mechanics,” and “Format/Citation” range from a low C to B-. The second set of scores matches the expectation for CUW’s student population, so the question is not why those scores are low, but why the others are high. One possible explanation is in the Core SLOs represented by the two sets of traits.

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1Each character trait from the rubric has been keyed to the specific SLOs it addresses from the current schema.
The first three fall under the Critical Thinking and Analysis categories, which are addressed repeatedly throughout the Core, while the remaining three fall under aspects of Communication Fluency that are only explicitly addressed in English 104. For what is essentially new and isolated material, the students are scoring the expected C range by the end of their semester of writing instruction. However, in areas of analysis and critical thinking, which are being taught and reinforced in other classes, students are scoring a full 10% higher at the end of their second semester.

RECOMMENDATIONS AND PROPOSED CHANGES
The English department will continue to use the new rubric in English 104 classes next year. If the score differential is due to an integration of related SLOs throughout the Core, we would expect more even scores on the fall semester rubrics, since the majority of 104 students would only be completing their first semester of general education coursework.

From the Core Curriculum perspective, this provides some initial concrete evidence about the collaborative nature of the Core in reinforcing skills, goals, and attitudes across multiple classes. With regard to the specific Core SLOs concerning communicative fluency, these initial results suggest that aspects of writing instruction to these SLOs should be more consciously integrated into a wider range of courses. Hopefully, the proposed writing-intensive courses being considered across many disciplines will be one way to address this. As we move forward with the Core reconsideration and revision process, this further indicates that we should find ways to reinforce concepts and skills in many areas.

ENG 103
Currently, ENG 103: Culture and Civilization: Literature, and ENG 190: Introduction to English Studies (the equivalent of 103 recommended for English majors), a core requirement for all CUW undergraduates, is not being assessed in any systematic, comprehensive way. During the coming year, the English Department intends to develop a set of two assessment tools for this class, which will primarily help with internal evaluations specific instructors and the consistency of the curriculum, but will also provide data on the course’s performance on Core SLOs (either according to the current document or the new University Liberal Arts Outcomes currently in development).

First, the Department will pilot will a pre-test and a post-test of all sections of ENG 103 during the coming fall semester. The pre-test will consist of a set of basic questions reflecting the overall SLOs (goals) of the class and the same test will be administered at the end of the semester. The department will compare the results of individual instructors as well as teaching methods used in the course. Parallel to this, two full-time faculty have been trying a new approach to the class that uses fewer formal out-of-class essays, but is more writing intensive through a large amount of in-class writing. Initial anecdotal evidence suggests that this teaching/learning strategy has potential to be more effective than the current sequence of course assignments. The English Department will therefore also use this tool to compare the sections using the traditional papers and exams to those employing a larger number of exploratory and expository essays in class.

Second, the English Department is planning to give all ENG 103 students an expanded course evaluation form with questions about the class (not about instructor performance). This would also be done in class near the end of the semester. While this tool relies on self-reported information from students, it will provide valuable insight into such issues as how much and what students perceive they are learning, where they
identify the strengths and weaknesses in particular units and assignments for the class, and where the course overlaps, reinforces, or integrates material (knowledge or skills) from elsewhere in their educational experience.

The department is designing a method to identify each student while maintaining confidentiality, so that the test scores and evaluation results can be linked. With the information collected, they can determine (1) what and how much students are learning in ENG 103 (and if students in some sections [see above] are learning more than students in other sections); and (2) how students’ appraisal of the course matches their performance in the class. The test and evaluation documents will stress to the students that their instructors will not have access to any individual test results, only the class averages for the pre-test, post-test, and evaluative questions.

**HISTORY**

HIST 103: Culture and Civilization is part of the regular assessment rotation conducted by the History Department. Susan Mobley, chair of the department, has agreed to work with the Director of Core Curriculum Assessment to provide regular annual data on the class beginning with the 2015-16 school year. While the department has used a variety of assessment methods for class in the past, they hope to develop a regular tool for consistent use in the future. This will be a topic of discussion at the initial departmental meetings for the upcoming semester.

**SUPPLEMENTAL MATERIALS**

Please find the following additional materials attached:

- Core Theology Report
- Core Philosophy Report
- ENG 104 Research Paper Rubric
- ENG 104 Rubric Data