

Montclair State University

Blue Ribbon Task Force Second Phase Final Report on Montclair Core Curriculum Implementation

2021-2022

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Table of Contents.

1. Introduction.
 - 1.1. Summary of work done by the first BRTF.
 - 1.2. Summary of work done by the P2/BRTF.
 - 1.3. Table of changes.
2. The Montclair Liberal Core.
 - 2.1. Program Overview.
 - 2.2. Mission.
 - 2.3. Unique Features.
 - 2.4. Definitions.
3. Implementation.
 - 3.1. Guiding Principles for P2/ BRTF Recommendations.
 - 3.2. P2/ BRTF Recommendations.
 - 3.2.1. Curriculum Structure.
 - 3.2.2. Credit Requirements.
 - 3.2.3. Pathways and Integration.
 - 3.2.4. Message and Outreach.
 - 3.2.5. Program Management.
 - 3.2.6. Course Certification and Program Assessment.
4. The Montclair Experience.
 - 4.1. World Languages Requirement.
 - 4.2. Community Engagement.
 - 4.3. Information Literacy.
 - 4.4. Justice, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion.
 - 4.5. New Student Experience.
5. Conclusions.
 - 5.1. Next Steps.
 - 5.2. Acknowledgements.
6. Appendices.
 - 6.1. Appendix I. Discussions and Rationale.
 - 6.1.1. Credit Requirements.
 - 6.1.2. Program Management.
 - 6.1.3. Course Certification and Program Assessment.
 - 6.1.4. Proposal by Dr. Constantine Coutras, Chair, Computer Science.
 - 6.2. Appendix II. Reference Documents.
 - 6.2.1. Memorandum of the Office of the Provost and Vice President of Academic Affairs, Willard Gingerich Announcing the Appointment of the Phase Two Blue Ribbon Task Force, January 27, 2021.
 - 6.2.2. Montclair State University, Blue Ribbon Task Force Final Report on General Education Curriculum Redesign, 2019-2020.
 - 6.3. Appendix III. Activities of the Phase Two Blue Ribbon Task Force.

- 6.3.1. McCaffrey, Katherine, “Spring 2021 BRTF: Activities and Progress” (n.d.)
- 6.3.2. McCaffrey, Katherine, “What’s Happening” (n.d.)
- 6.4. Appendix IV. Library Documents.
 - 6.4.1. “Information Literacy.”
 - 6.4.2. “Integrate Information Literacy into the Core: Plan and Resources Required.”
- 6.5. Appendix V. Learning Objectives and Rubrics.

1. Introduction.

On January 27, 2021, Provost and Vice President of Academic Affairs Willard P. Gingerich announced the formation of the Phase Two Blue Ribbon Task Force (P2/BRTF). The goal set for this second Task Force was to articulate “in further detail the content of the curriculum, how it will be delivered, and how learning outcomes will be assessed”. (See Memorandum of the Office of the Provost and Vice President of Academic Affairs, Willard Gingerich Announcing the Appointment of the Phase Two Blue Ribbon Task Force, January 27, 2021, [Appendix II](#)).

The present report describes the work done by members of the P2/BRTF towards reaching these goals. It includes:

- A) Recommendations about the structure of the new Montclair Core, governance and management, and certification and assessment of the curriculum.
- B) Recommendations on how to proceed with the redesign of the Montclair Experience and its integration to the Montclair Core.
- C) Lastly, this Report includes a section where members of the P2/BRTF offer a more extensive explanation for some of the recommendations presented in this report. The inclusion of this section seeks to acknowledge the most salient objections that were considered by the Task Force and explain the rationale that led to their final conclusions.

1.1 Summary of work done by the First BRTF.

The following is a brief summary of the work done by the first BRTF:

The First Blue Ribbon Task Force was appointed by the Provost in the Spring of 2019 and started its work in the Fall of the same year. (BRTF Report, 2020: [Appendix II](#)).

- This task force recommended a vision for a new Core Curriculum that included the following salient features:

- Proposed changing the name of the program from General Education to Montclair Core.
- Identified four institutional competencies as those that should organize the Core Curriculum: Know, Communicate, Explore, and Flourish.
- Envisaged cultivating these competencies through fourteen learning outcomes: Aesthetic and Literary Interpretation, Analyzing Cultures and Societies, Assessment of Knowledge Claims, Civic and Community Engagement, Creative Production and Expression, Effective Written Communication, Ethical Inquiry, Health and Well-Being, Interactive Communication, Plurilingualism, Quantitative and Mathematical Reasoning, Scientific Reasoning, Shared Histories and Historical Thinking, and Technological Literacy.
- Required students to take a minimum of 40 credits in the Montclair Core. At least six of these were to have been in Effective Written Communication.
- Proposed that any given course within the Montclair Core could satisfy up to two learning outcomes (this had not been the case in the existing General Education Program).

- Invited students to take up to 12 credits of the Montclair Core within their majors. (This was possible in some majors but rarely to the extent of 12 credits).
- Students would also be required to follow the World Languages requirement as it was established under the existing policy, but it was not clear whether this would also be the case for transfer students whose General Education requirements had been waived.
- Lastly, the BRTF recommended the replacement of the World Cultures requirement for what was then termed an Anti-Oppression Analysis and Action designation, and introduced a Community Engagement designation.

1.2. Summary of work done by the P2/BRTF.

In response to these recommendations Provost Willard Gingerich charged a second task force (P2/BRTF). The new task force was to address a series of specific goals (See Memorandum of the Office of the Provost and Vice President of Academic Affairs, Willard Gingerich Announcing the Appointment of the Phase Two Blue Ribbon Task Force, January 27, 2021, [Appendix II](#)). The following is a summary of the activities of the P2/BRTF towards reaching the goals outlined by Provost:

Goal 1.- In consultation with chairs and deans, define the curricular parameters by which each College or School will ensure essential student exposure to the 14 core competencies outlined in the TF Report.

During the Spring of 2021, members of the P2/BRTF conducted a series of meetings with department chairs to further inform them of the recommendations of the first Task Force and consult them on the viability of this vision from the perspective of their programs. It was concluded that most programs were able and willing to participate in the new Montclair Core. These meetings also offered an opportunity for chairs to express their concerns about the planned program.

Goal 2.- Define the guidelines by which departments will adapt their curriculum to the BRTF model consistent with college/school missions and the learning outcomes established for the core.

During the Fall of 2021 members of the P2/BRTF conducted meetings with selected members of the faculty to further clarify the definition of the Learning Outcomes identified in the model proposed in the first BRTF report. These meetings resulted in the revision of the definitions and objectives that will guide the inclusion of courses into the Core Curriculum, and the creation of rubrics that will be used in the process of assessment.

Goal 3.- Develop a well-constructed and streamlined plan for assessment of the core curriculum outcomes that will lead to and prompt reportable advancements in student learning.

In addition to revising definitions, clarifying objectives, and developing rubrics for each of the fourteen learning outcomes, the task force also conducted extensive research on assessment models at other institutions. Members of the task force also had conversations with General education leaders and assessment specialists at other colleges and universities. This work served as the foundation of an Assessment Framework that is detailed in this report.

Goal 4.- Deliver a plan for the sustainability of the program which includes a protocol for assessing the student experience of the program and a design for program management which would ensure a long-term commitment to quality.

This report recommends the creation of a leadership structure constituted by the faculty in collaboration with the University administration. Having studied different leadership models nation-wide, members of the P2/BRTF are convinced that the proposed structure will allow the new program to be efficient, flexible and sustainable. This report will also speak of and to objections to the proposed model.

Goal 5.- Obtain ratification from the faculty for the program design and process for implementation.

In accordance with the recommendation made by the BRTF report, this report also recommends that, as soon as there is an agreement with the administration on the recommendations made in this report, it be submitted to the faculty for ratification.

Goal 6.- Identify resources that will be needed to implement the new core program.

When applicable, this report will identify the resources necessary to implement the program.

1.3. Table of changes.

	Current General Education Program	First BRTF Report Recommendations	P2/BRTF Report Recommendations
Credit Load.	- 42 credits (depending on major) plus 6-9 credits World Languages and Cultures Graduation Requirements (if students have no prior experience and/or the ability to test-out).	- At least 40 credits, 12 of which can be filled in the major.	- At least 40 credits, 12 of which can be filled in the major.
Structure and Integration	- 15 Categories of Courses plus World Cultures and World Languages (if students have no prior experience and/or the ability to test-out). Most courses satisfy one category. There are limited cases in which one course can satisfy one category of General Education and one requirement in either World Cultures and/or the Major.	- Identified four General Competencies and distributed them over 14 learning outcomes. - Each learning outcome was to be satisfied by one or more 3-4 credit courses. - One course would satisfy up to two learning outcomes.	- Reorganized Learning Outcomes in three competencies. - Recommends the organization of thematic pathways that will allow students to integrate knowledge and satisfy several learning outcomes meaningfully and efficiently.

<p>Governance, Certification and Assessment</p>	<p>- A General Education Committee was in charge of certifying courses into the program. The chair of the Committee was designated by the Provost's Office. Committee members were elected by Colleges and Programs. Certification and Assessment were not integrated until the latter years of the program.</p>	<p>- Recommended that an implementation committee establish mechanisms for the certification and assessment of courses.</p>	<p>- Recommends the creation of a leadership and management structure that will ensure the flexibility and sustainability of the program. This structure includes the appointment of a Director of the Montclair Core. It also recommends the constitution of an Advisory Council. Both the Director and members of the Council should be chosen from members of the faculty, preferably those with experience teaching in the Core program.</p> <p>- Director and Advisory Council will implement the certification and assessment processes and will monitor the program in case changes are needed.</p> <p>- This report offers objectives and rubrics developed by the faculty that will guide the process of certification and assessment, as well as an assessment framework.</p>
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<p>Graduation Requirements and The Montclair Experience</p>	<p>- World Languages, and World Cultures (a misnamed requirement for a group of courses that seek to integrate approaches to equity, diversity and inclusion (EDI) nationally and internationally) were categorized as Graduation Requirements when the transfer articulation agreement was incorporated. As such, they were placed outside the General Education program.</p>	<p>- Recommended that World Languages and EDI graduation requirements be retained. - Recommended that the, confusingly named, World Cultures Designation be replaced by an Anti-Oppression Analysis and Action designation. - Recommended that all students (including transfer students) take at least one 3-credit course with a Community Engagement designation. - For all of these the committee recommended the exploration of non-credit bearing activities that could fill these requirements.</p>	<p>- Recommends that the Montclair Experience be constituted by the following components: - New Student Experience. - World Languages. - Community Engagement. - Justice, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion. - Information Literacy. - Recommends that more research is done to better assess how to integrate these elements in the Montclair Core so as to avoid adding too much complexity and an undue credit burden on students.</p>
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2. The Montclair Core.

2.1. Program Overview.

The Montclair Core ensures that all students develop foundational skills to acquire, evaluate, produce and disseminate knowledge across diverse fields of study; and to use these skills and knowledge as a means to reflect on and activate their personal, professional and social experiences. The goal of the Core curriculum is to provide students with the tools and dispositions that will allow them to engage in lifelong exploration of the world in its past, present, and future complexity, The Core envisions that students will continue to grow and apply their knowledge and skills in ways that contribute meaningfully and constructively to their own lives, to their communities, and the world at large.

2.2. Mission.

The purpose of the Montclair Core Program is to provide students with an education grounded in the liberal arts and informed by the opportunities and complexities of the University’s

metropolitan setting. The aim of the program is to inspire lifelong learning by introducing students to ideas, perspectives, and experiences relevant to their lives. The Montclair Core Program cultivates the skills, knowledge, and values expected of all educated persons through the achievement of specific student learning outcomes.

2.3. Unique Features.

The Montclair Core embraces the university's identity as a public institution in a dynamic and complex metropolitan context. Situated in Northern New Jersey only 13 miles from New York City, Montclair State is energized by a diverse student body; its connections to New York City, a global and economic powerhouse; and its own rich regional history. The curriculum thus emphasizes a blend of knowledge, skills and values necessary to prepare a diverse student body to navigate the challenges of a fast-changing social and professional environment, and contribute positive and meaningful solutions to local, regional and national problems.

Recognizing the University's status as a Carnegie Foundation designated Community-Engaged campus, the Core incorporates collaborative efforts to address issues of public concern by building civic and community engagement into the curriculum.

2.4 Definitions.

The following are important definitions used in the current implementation plan.

Competency: A general statement that describes the general goals of the Montclair Core. As such competencies represent the assessment points around which The Montclair Core is built and on the basis of which it will be evaluated.

Outcome: A very specific statement that describes exactly what a student is intended to learn and do in some measurable way. Outcomes are to be assessed within the framework of the general competencies that The Montclair Core is meant to achieve.

Montclair Core: This is the program to replace the current General Education program at Montclair State University as described in the document below.

Montclair Experience: Shared experiences for all Montclair students (first-year and transfer students) that relate to outcomes in the Montclair Core and will be completed before graduating. These include the New Student Experience, Community Engagement, World Languages, Information Literacy and Justice, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion.

Additionally, this report distinguishes between three groups of student populations by the following categorizations:

- **First-Year Start (FYS) Students:** This categorization refers to students who begin their undergraduate education at MSU. These students must complete the Montclair Core.

- **Transfer No-Degree (TND) Students:** This categorization refers to students who begin their undergraduate education at a different institution, but transfer to MSU prior to the completion of an Associate's Degree. These students must complete the Montclair Core, but their prior coursework may be substituted as appropriate.

- **Transfer with Associate's Degree (TAD) Students:** This categorization refers to students who begin their undergraduate education at a different institution, earn an Associate's Degree, then transfer to MSU to complete a Bachelor's Degree.

The Montclair Core curriculum is aligned with the Middle States Commission on Higher Education core competencies: oral and written communication, scientific and quantitative reasoning, critical analysis and reasoning, technological competency, and information literacy, as well as the study of values, ethics, and diverse perspectives.

3. Implementation.

3.1 Guiding Principles for P2/BRTF Recommendations:

The BRTF recommendations for the implementation of the Montclair Core are guided by the following principles:

The Montclair Core will:

- 1 Ensure that graduates possess a breadth of knowledge in multiple fields and well-developed research, analytical and communication skills applicable in multiple disciplines.
- 2 Develop an awareness/understanding of values, ethics, and perspectives that permit them to be active, engaged, and responsible members of society.
- 3 Provide a meaningful structure that encourages students to understand the value of their educational experience, and integrate knowledge and skills across disciplines.
- 4 Strive to make its structure and requirements clear to all stakeholders.
- 5 Reinforce the University's status as a research-intensive institution and Carnegie designated Community Engaged campus.
- 6 Be faculty-driven and expand full-time faculty participation and collaboration in the core.
- 7 Advance the University's strategic mission to foster student growth through diversity and access.

- 8 Evolve, adapt, and improve through the use of well-defined educational objectives, efficient administration and assessment, and evidence-based decision-making.

3.2. Phase Two Blue Ribbon Task Force Recommendations.

3.2.1. Curriculum Structure.

The P2/BRTF recommends the following structure for the Montclair Core:

Competencies.

The goals of the Montclair Core Program are articulated in three competencies that are to serve as guiding principles for the assessment and organization of the program. These are:

- **Knowing.**

Students will develop knowledge across diverse fields of study and deepen their capacity to formulate arguments and evaluate claims based on evidence.

- **Communicating.**

Students will grow in their abilities to write, orally present, and interact within social, professional, political, and creative contexts.

- **Problem-Solving.**

Students will develop problem-solving strategies informed by critical thinking, ethical and social values.

Learning Outcomes.

Students will be able to achieve the competencies listed above by pursuing 14 learning outcomes. Unlike the previous General Education program, where an outcome could be satisfied by a single course, each course approved for the Montclair Core may satisfy up to two outcomes.

Knowing.

- ***Assessment of Knowledge Claims.***

Students will be able to formulate and justify their positions using disciplinary practices. Students will be able to identify and evaluate factual statements, value judgments, and assumptions.

- ***Quantitative and Mathematical Reasoning.***

Students will demonstrate how fundamental elements of mathematical and/or statistical knowledge are applied to solve real-life problems.

- ***Aesthetic and Literary Interpretation.***

Students will be able to understand and interpret cultural works, such as those in the domains of literature, art, music, design, visual arts, and performing arts and situate them in historical and social contexts.

- **Analyzing Cultures and Societies.**

Students will be able to employ research-based approaches to knowledge- building and understanding of the societies, systems, and cultures they identify with as well as societies throughout the globe.

- **Scientific Reasoning.**

Scientific reasoning refers to consistent, logical thought patterns that are employed during the process of scientific inquiry, enabling individuals to propose relationships between observed phenomena, design experiments to assess the validity of these relationships, and evaluate the results of these experiments, all using the tools, skills, and techniques of the natural sciences, which include Biology, Chemistry, Physics, Astronomy, Earth Sciences.

- **Historical Thinking.**

Courses in this category will focus on a crucial human time sequence such as economic, political, social, and cultural change in a society or from one society to another; change in science and the idea of science; or change in literature and the arts. The course will fulfill the integrative function of history by treating a particular set of changes, or a field of knowledge or expression, in terms of a wider society, which is itself changing.

Communicating.

- **Effective Written Communication.**

Students will have knowledge and skills for effective communication in writing.

- **Interactive Communication.**

Students will gain the confidence, knowledge, and skills for effective oral or other forms of communication in presentations and discussions, across face-to-face and mediated settings.

- **Creative Production and Expression.**

Students will create, engage in, and/or respond experientially to diverse forms of human creative production and expression.

- **World Languages and Intercultural Competency.**

Students will build confidence, flexibility, empathy, and employment potential by demonstrating and/or enhancing their communicative skills and intercultural competence in a natural world language other than English with which they have previous experience, or by embarking on the study of a new language and its associated cultures. Courses in this category are designed to

help students advance toward achieving, at minimum, the intermediate proficiency level as described by ACTFL.

Problem-Solving.

- **Ethical Inquiry.**

Students will identify, analyze, and evaluate moral and social justice questions across a range of disciplines. Students will be able to conceptualize ethical decisions and social justice issues and claims. Students will demonstrate ethical reasoning and behaviors in line with their chosen discipline.

- **Civic and Community Responsibility.**

Students will develop capacities for understanding and engaging with critical social, cultural, or scientific issues affecting their communities and societies.

- **Health and Well-Being.**

Students will gain knowledge, methods, and/or experiences enabling them to promote their own health and well-being, as well as the health and well-being of others.

- **Technological Literacy**

Students exhibiting technological literacy will be able to access, analyze, evaluate, communicate, reflect, and act within and across a variety of information environments. Students will identify the limitations of as well as gain proficiency in diverse technologies to engage in problem solving.

3.2.2 Credit Requirements.

The P2/BRTF recommends that the credit requirements recommended by the first Blue Ribbon Task Force are adopted. These are:

“To complete the Montclair Core, students will:

- Meet each learning outcome by taking one or more courses that satisfy that outcome.
- Take a minimum of 28 credits of Montclair Core courses outside the cognate disciplines of their major.
- Take a minimum of 40 credits in the Montclair Core.
- Complete 6 credits in **Effective Written Communication**, with a foundational writing course constituting 3 of those credits and the other 3 credits coming from a designated “writing-intensive course” (BRTF Final Report on General Education Curriculum Redesign”:14, [Appendix II](#))

Members of the P2/BRTF wish to acknowledge that chairs of high-credit programs objected to the recommendation of a 40-credit minimum for the completion of the Core. Representatives of these programs argued that this credit requirement made it difficult for their students to have a rich and diverse educational experience. The P2/BRTF considered these concerns, however, it was concluded that by increasing the number of Core credits that a student can fulfill within the major, and through the creation of thematic pathways, high-credit programs would have the opportunity to better integrate the Core curriculum with the needs and experiences of their majors, and allow for a more diverse and rich student experience. The task force acknowledges, nonetheless, that even with these changes, students in some programs will still face serious restrictions. In those cases, it may be necessary to consider making specific adjustments to the credit requirements of some programs. Please refer to Appendix I for a more extended discussion of the objections and possible alternatives for the 40- credit recommendation.

3.2.3. Pathways and Integration.

Students seeking to satisfy their Core requirements will have the opportunity to choose individual courses. In addition, the P2/BRTF recommends the creation of a First Year Experience and Thematic Pathways. These initiatives are aimed at making students' experiences more meaningful by helping them better integrate the knowledge they develop from different courses. The recommendations are as follows:

1. Create a foundational first-year experience that foregrounds particular types of learning (skillful writing, quantitative reasoning, technological literacy, interactive communication, and world languages and intercultural communication).
2. Create thematically organized combinations of core courses (thematic Pathways), each from a minimum of 2, preferably 3-4 different colleges, and with a minimum of 3 different disciplines participating. These interdisciplinary groupings, or pathways, are envisioned as forming the basis of interdisciplinary minors.
3. Organize and fund a series of workshops where faculty can come together to discuss and collaborate in the creation of new Pathways. We recommend that faculty who attend these workshops and make a commitment to the creation of Pathways are, in return, compensated for their time and effort, and duly recognized by their departments and colleges.
4. The P2/BRTF recommends the appointment of a dedicated Librarian to support and assist in the development of new courses and pathways and to ensure that our Library holds all the necessary materials to safeguard the success of these educational initiatives. (See Appendix IV).

3.2.4. Message and Outreach.

One stated reason for revising the existing General Education program is that many students experienced it as a burden rather than as a central component of their education. The vision offered by the first BRTF and the recommendations offered in this report are aimed at creating a curricular structure that will enable students to integrate their experiences in meaningful ways. However, the addition of flexibility and integration also adds complexity. Thus, it is of vital importance that the goals, structure, and overall functioning of the program are well-communicated to the university community. Recommendations to this end are:

- 1 The value and importance of the Montclair Core must be affirmed and communicated systematically throughout the university, starting with deliberate, coordinated communication with key stakeholders: advisors, University College, the Library, the Registrar, and enrollment managers.
- 2 The Montclair Core will communicate its purpose and organization in a new, dynamic webpage.
- 3 Advising tools across the university (curriculum sheets, degree flowcharts, etc.) will need to be developed and/or redesigned to illustrate different pathways to meet Core requirements.

3.2.5. Program Management.

It would be difficult, if not impossible, to implement the Montclair Core without a leadership structure that is faculty driven and supported by the University administration. This report recommends that the Montclair Core operates as an independent program managed by a Director and an Advisory Council. Before presenting fuller descriptions of these positions, it is worth underlining the importance of having a leadership structure that is responsible for the management and assessment of the program, and also accountable to the faculty and the administration. Furthermore, it will give faculty the authority and the structures to identify problems and make any necessary changes, thus making the program more flexible and sustainable.

Director of the Montclair Core Program

We recommend that there be a full-time Director of the Montclair Core who is an MSU faculty member. This faculty member will be supported by a full-time staff member. The Director will have faculty release-time of 15 hours a year (in line with the size of the Core Program, assessment responsibilities, and what is granted other program directors and chairs in the University), as well as summer salary to work with members of various divisions of the university in all matters relevant to the success of the Montclair Core program. It is

recommended that the Director of the Montclair Core be selected by the Advisory Council (the parameters governing which will be outlined below). Anticipated responsibilities include:

- Facilitating faculty efforts to develop new and modify existing courses and Pathways to populate the new Core curriculum.
- Developing and managing pilot initiatives.
- Chairing the Montclair Core Advisory Committee and, when necessary, participating on its various subcommittees. The Chair will guide discussions, identify action items, and follow up on certification and other curricular processes. The Chair will act as a non-voting member of the committee (except to break a tie).
- Participating as a Montclair Core liaison at campus wide leadership meetings including the UUCC, the University Senate, Chairs and Deans Council meetings.
- Helping to coordinate the efforts of Admissions, Academic Advising, Campus Life, and academic departments in providing an outstanding Core Education program to our students.
- Providing a point of contact for academic and faculty advisors seeking information on the Core Curriculum. This will include directing transfer students who need credit adjustments to the relevant departments.
- Meeting with various external constituencies which have a stake in our Montclair Core Program.
- Contributing and advocating for faculty development resources for the growth, revision and development of the Core.
- Working on grant projects in support of the Core program.
- Teaching at least one class in the Montclair core per year.
- Overseeing the process of assessment and writing assessment reports for both Faculty and external evaluation agencies.
- Creating University-wide initiatives, lectures, common reads, or themed events to engage the campus community in celebrating different elements of the Montclair Core.
- Overseeing the budget of the Core Curriculum.
- Troubleshooting scheduling and enrollment patterns in consultation with enrollment managers at the college level.

Staff Assistant.

The Director will be supported by a full-time professional staff assistant who will be concerned with the more technical and logistical aspects of the program, including:

- Scheduling of events, meetings, and task deadlines.
- Organizing and maintaining files, documents, and databases.
- Compiling data and generating reports and presentations.
- Attending meetings, distributing materials, and taking notes and/or minutes for circulation.
- Acting as program liaison with various constituencies on campus.
- Liaising with students.
- Supporting Director in research, analysis and reporting of best practices in GE/Core Curriculum and Assessment in higher education.
- Interacting professionally with key campus leaders and committees (e.g. Core Curriculum committee, Academic Advising, Office of the Registrar, Admissions, ad hoc committees), and assisting in coordinating logistical details for tasks, meetings and events.
- Communicating through website, social media, and other means to improve the visibility and transparency of the Core.

Montclair Core Faculty Advisory Council.

The Montclair Core Faculty Advisory Council will ensure that the Core is meaningful and responsive to the needs of all undergraduates. The Council will coordinate the review of course proposals from a university-wide perspective and maintain appropriate inter-college relationships with regard to Core matters. The Council will advise the administration on policy level changes and other matters pertaining to the Core. The Council will facilitate and support the assessment of student learning outcomes in the core, and ensure the ongoing monitoring and assessment of Student Learning Outcomes.

Membership on the Faculty Advisory Council will be recognized as a major service contribution to the health and vitality of the university. Maintaining a vibrant, engaging curriculum is an ongoing process that involves innovation and reflection informed by robust assessment. The Advisory Council will provide oversight to make sure that the Montclair Core is living up to its mandate.

Service on the Advisory Council will emerge from faculty who participate and care about the Core curriculum. The P2/BRTF recommends that faculty elect members to the Advisory Council from a slate of at-large candidates who demonstrate a track record of involvement and commitment to the Core. As necessary, the Montclair Core Director and the Provost's office will work to develop a pipeline of participants, and will pay attention to issues of equity, representation and balance.

The P2/BRTF wishes to acknowledge that one of our members, Dr. Constantine Coutras, offered an alternative proposal. His proposal and the task force discussion of it can be found in [Appendix I](#).

3.2.6. Course Certification and Program Assessment.

Certification.

The P2/BRTF was unanimous in its belief that certification and assessment of the Core curriculum should be carried out by faculty who are knowledgeable and impartial. To lay a foundation for broad faculty ownership of the curriculum, the task force expended significant energy during Fall 2021 convening teams of faculty experts in each of the new Core's 14 learning outcomes. The goal of these groups was to define the learning objectives and rubrics in the new Core curriculum. In some cases, this involved clarifying the language of the original task force report. (See Appendix V) The documents, created by expert faculty, will allow the Advisory Council to identify which courses will be admitted to the new Core curriculum, and how they will be assessed.

The process of certification will be coordinated by members of the Advisory Council. Each member will receive course proposals for a particular learning outcome. Upon receiving course proposals, members of the Advisory Council will review them and, if necessary, consult the authors of the proposal for clarification or revision, before issuing a recommendation of approval for the full council. A course that seeks certification into the Core will be asked to present a succinct statement and syllabus explaining how the course will satisfy the designated 1 or 2 SLOs (no course can satisfy more than 2 SLOs) in accordance with the established rubrics (See Appendix V). In addition, to be admitted, the course will need to commit to an assessment process on a regular three-year rotation, and may be subject to recertification every 5 years.

Courses that already exist within the curriculum and are certified in the current General Education program will be automatically certified in the new curriculum. However, they will have to provide the necessary assessment documents so they can be assessed during the first assessment cycle. These courses will be subject to re-certification after five years.

New courses that exist within the curriculum but are not certified in the current General Education program will need to be certified by the process described above.

New course proposals must pass through the regular curriculum approval process however, they may simultaneously request certification in the Core curriculum. As a program, the Core will function similarly to a department or program that authorizes a course from a different program

to be listed in its curriculum. Thus, Core certification can be secured before a course is fully reviewed by the University Curriculum Committee.

The proposal of Dr. Constantine Coutras also offers an alternative to the process of certification recommended in this report. Please refer to [Appendix I](#) to read the proposal and the Task Force discussion.

Assessment Framework

A key concern of the first and second BRTF has been that the new Core curriculum is built upon a foundation of robust processes of certification and assessment. The definition of objectives and the creation of rubrics for each learning outcome done in Fall 2021 by the P2/BRTF in conjunction with faculty experts constitutes a first step towards establishing this foundation. What follows are the P2/BRTF recommendations for an Assessment Framework of the new Core Curriculum:

- Cycle of Assessment.

The Core Curriculum program will be assessed on a five-year cycle. The first semester of each cycle will be devoted to revising previous practices and preparing for the new cycle. During the next eight semesters of the cycle, members of the Advisory Council will collect data for each learning outcome. Each Learning outcome will be assessed once during this cycle. The last semester of the cycle will be devoted to analyzing data and producing an assessment report. The following is a suggested model of how the cycle will progress.

Fall 2023: Revision and Preparation.

Spring 2024: Assessment of LO1 and LO2.

Fall 2024: Assessment of LO3 and LO4.

Spring 2025: Assessment of LO5 and LO6.

Fall 2025: Assessment of LO7 and LO8.

Spring 2026: Assessment of LO9 and LO10

Fall 2026: Assessment of LO11 and LO12.

Spring 2027: Assessment of LO13 and LO14.

Fall 2027: Assessment of Montclair Experience.

Spring 2028: Analysis and Reporting.

- Instruments and Methods.

This framework recommends the use of multiple measures to capture a holistic picture of student learning. Direct methods will be used to examine student learning through student work submitted by faculty members. These samples of student work will be scored using existing

rubrics developed by members of the faculty. These rubrics will be revised in preparation of each assessment cycle by Montclair Core Faculty Teams. Members of these teams will have expertise in particular content areas and will serve as consultants, reviewers, and mentors in the assessment process. In preparation for each assessment cycle, the Core Director and the Advisory Council will coordinate the recruitment of Faculty Teams and ensure they are properly acknowledged and compensated.

The data produced by Montclair Core Faculty Teams will be submitted to the Advisory Council. The Advisory Council and the Director of the Montclair Core will develop processes of collection of student work and communication of results and data that ensure that the privacy of students and faculty is protected.

This framework also recommends the use of indirect methods that will be used to identify the perception of learning or characteristics associated with learning. Indirect methods include the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE), the Alumni Survey, and the Co-op Student Evaluation.

- Data analysis and reports.

Data will be presented to the Director who will be in charge of analyzing, and generating reports for the University community and accreditation bodies. Through these reports, the Director and Advisory Council will specifically address areas of concern and issue recommendations on how to make improvements to the curriculum. They will also offer specific evaluations of measures taken in the past in response to problems identified in previous reports. Reports will be publicly available and faculty and other members of the university community will be able to comment on the findings. In preparation for a new assessment cycle, the Director, in collaboration with members of the Advisory Council, will convene Montclair Core Faculty Teams to review, plan, and design or refine methods, instruments and processes.

4.- The Montclair Experience.

The P2/BRTF discussed the implementation of the Montclair Experience, however, it was clear from our discussions that each of the components of the Montclair Experience required further investigation and investment without which this Task Force could not make informed recommendations. This report offers a vision for what should be the key areas of the Montclair Experience, and a summary of our discussions on what needs to be considered, and strengthened for each of these areas. In light of this the P2/BRTF recommends that:

- The Montclair Experience is composed of the following areas: New Student Experience, World Languages, Community Engagement, Justice, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion, and Information Literacy.
- The implementation of the Montclair Experience should aim to strike a balance between offering transfer students the kinds of support, activities and diverse and inclusive experiences we consider fundamental to a Montclair State degree, while avoiding creating an undue credit burden.
- The Director and Advisory Council of the Montclair Core, in collaboration with the University administration and other university stakeholders, work towards designing the most efficient ways for students to be exposed to the Montclair Experience through a mixture of credit and non-credit bearing experiences.

4.1. World Languages Requirement.

In its final report the BRTF recommended that this requirement would be satisfied when a student “Achieve[d] at least intermediate proficiency in a language carrying the ‘world language’ (WL) designation.” (“BRTF Report of Curriculum Redesign,” 2020: 17, [Appendix II](#)).

This recommendation preserved the requirement as it exists in the current system (under the current General Education program, World Languages exists outside of the program as a graduation requirement in order to ensure that all Montclair graduates -including transfer students- have exposure to world languages and cultures). The new Montclair Core incorporated a World Languages and Intercultural Competency learning outcome for first-year students, but this does not include transfer students (for whom, as per articulation agreements, General Education requirements are waived). Members of both task forces discussed whether keeping this requirement in the Montclair Experience was necessary, given that many New Jersey-based students arrive at Montclair having already studied world languages in high school (this is not the case nationally). They also reflected on the extent to which language study might represent a burden for students who transfer to Montclair State having completed an Associate’s Degree that did not require exposure to a world language. Members of the task force thought it important to have a better sense of how many students actually arrive at Montclair State unable to demonstrate intermediate proficiency in a language other than English. In the absence of this data, the P2/BRTF could not make an informed recommendation.

4.2. Community Engagement.

The first BRTF recommended a course-based community engagement experience as a graduation requirement for all Montclair students. The first task force noted the urgency of the current

historical moment, and the desire for students to graduate from Montclair State as active citizens, prepared to engage some of the most complex and pressing problems in human history.

Scaling up community engagement to the level proposed by the BRTF will entail a significant expansion of course offerings, faculty development, partnerships beyond the campus, and administrative support. While the Center for Community Engagement (situated in Academic Affairs) provides crucial resources for the design and execution of community engaged courses spanning the university's curriculum, the P2/BRTF recommends that additional resources, structures, and policies be implemented in order to achieve the vision of the first task force. The following are recommendations to this end:

Establish a Task Force on Community Engagement. The Provost will appoint a faculty-led task force to assess the current state of Community Engagement at MSU, including strengths, areas that could be enhanced, and strategies for scaling up. The task force would examine Benchmark institutions and other campuses with strong community engagement programs to understand the best practices on a national level. Preliminary investigation identified Arizona State, UNC Greensboro, Metropolitan University, Michigan State, Pacific University, and Portland State as offering interesting models of comparison.

Establish a Faculty Advisory Council. This committee would promote community-engaged teaching, learning, research, and service on campus. The council would develop policies and procedures that would advance the practice of community engaged teaching, learning and scholarship.

Create a development and fundraising plan to support a robust Community engaged campus. Areas for attention include expanded staff for the Office of Community Engagement, increased transportation, stipends for faculty and students, and resources for curricular development.

Faculty Development Faculty will need access to resources and training on course design, assignments, activities, student readings and the foundations of civic learning. Because civic engagement is inherently collaborative, we encourage the creation of a community of practice, to allow CE faculty a forum to share ideas, resources and support.

Faculty Evaluation The current model of evaluation for faculty tenure and promotion undervalues the contribution of community engaged scholarship. We

recommend that faculty be offered the opportunity to classify their scholarly contribution as “engaged scholarship” and to be evaluated in terms of public impact. We recommend implementing structures and policies that will recognize and reward the considerable work engaged faculty perform in terms of recruiting and cultivating community partners, supervising students, and developing collaborative and transformative research projects.

4.3. Information Literacy.

While conducting research on how different institutions structure and deliver their General Education programs, it became clear that the area of Information Literacy was not being adequately emphasized in the Montclair Core. In light of a clear deterioration in our public discourse, the dissemination of misinformation, and significant changes in the ways in which information is shared, discussed and examined, the P2/BRTF considered the importance of including Information Literacy as a key element of the Montclair Experience. In collaboration with Catherine Baird (Online and Outreach Services Librarian) and Dorianne Mizzy (Dean of Library Services and Library Administration) this report makes some suggestions aimed at making Information Literacy an integral part of the Montclair Experience.

Definition:

“Information Literacy is defined by the [Association of College and Research Libraries](#) as ‘the set of integrated abilities encompassing the reflective discovery of information, the understanding of how information is produced and valued, and the use of information in creating new knowledge and participating ethically in communities of learning.’ (ACRL, 2015)

We understand information literacy to be a complex social practice, enabled by deep conceptual knowledge of information structures, a recognition of the role of power and the social side of our information practice, and finally, the intentional and reflective habits we build as we find our voice and engage in action.

Information literacy is not taught through a single class or a single assignment. Rather we see it as a practice that is woven throughout our daily lives. Components of information literacy are found throughout almost all of the 14 learning outcomes and rubrics created by the Blue Ribbon Task Force and rubric teams.” (“Information Literacy,” Appendix IV).

As is the case with other elements of the Montclair Experience, the challenge lies in ensuring that all students (including Transfer Students) are exposed to Information Literacy without adding extra credits and complexity to their programs. Some ideas that should be considered for future implementation are:

- Devise a mechanism by which Information Literacy can be incorporated in the existing Learning outcomes of the Montclair Core.
- Suitable courses and/or experiences could be designated “Information Literacy” (IL).
- Programs throughout the university may be encouraged to designate at least one course as an Information literacy course. This will also ensure that transfer students can fulfill this requirement as part of their major.
- The Advisory Council, faculty experts and university librarians should establish procedures to designate and assess courses.
- The Montclair State library should appoint a Student Success Librarian dedicated to the Core to serve as the primary liaison between the library and the Core.
- The Montclair State library should appoint a Community Outreach Librarian who can enhance and strengthen the practices of Information Literacy through outreach, service and collaboration with high schools, community colleges and local libraries in our community.
- The Montclair State Library will create partnerships with the Office for Faculty Advancement to establish a new information literacy teaching professional development opportunity for faculty and instructors teaching courses in the Core curriculum. (“Integrate Information Literacy into the Core: Plan and Resources Required,” [Appendix IV](#)).

4.4. Justice, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion.

The first BRTF recommended that students needed to “complete at least one course that meets a new Anti-Oppression Analysis and Action (AAA) designation”. This was intended to more accurately describe the contents of the poorly titled “World Cultures” graduation requirement. This particular recommendation of the first BRTF elicited a number of responses from the faculty who agreed with the need and importance of the designation, but were unsure that “Anti-Oppression Analysis and Action” was the best articulation for it. The P2/ BRTF discussed other possible ways to designate this area of the curriculum and finally arrived at Justice, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (JEDI). Unfortunately, there was no broad agreement on this designation, its definition, or on the means by which it could be implemented in the curriculum. The following are some of the ideas that the task force discussed and should be considered in the implementation of this requirement in the Montclair Experience.

- Devise mechanisms by which Justice, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion can be incorporated in the existing Learning outcomes of the Montclair Core.
- Suitable courses and/or experiences could be designated as Justice, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (JEDI)
- Programs throughout the university may be encouraged to designate at least one course as a JEDI course. This will also ensure that transfer students can fulfill this requirement as part of their major.

- The Advisory Council in collaboration with faculty experts should work towards defining this designation.
- Once an agreement has been reached on the definition of the designation, the Advisory Council and faculty experts will establish procedures to designate and assess courses.

4.5. New Student Seminar.

The first BRTF recommended that the New Student Experience Seminar/ course or its equivalent would remain part of the Montclair Experience; however, the course is not generally required for transfer students. The P2/BRTF discussed whether the New Student Experience could be included in the Montclair Core as a course that could satisfy one or two learning outcomes. However, in its current form, the course could not meaningfully satisfy any of the learning outcomes. The task force discussed two possibilities:

First, that the course be re-conceptualized in a way that could satisfy one or two learning outcomes. In this way, it could be included in the Montclair Core without adding to the credit load of students. This solution, however, would mean that transfer students would not participate in this aspect of the Montclair Experience.

Second, that the content and experiences delivered through the New Student Experience/Seminar are presented as a non-credit-bearing activity. This could take the form of short modules that the student would complete within their first week as a freshman or newly admitted student.

There are multiple ways in which students new to Montclair State can be introduced to the functioning of the institution, and the challenges of college life. University College in collaboration with other Colleges should continue to explore the best ways to achieve this without adding to the credit-burden of students.

5. Conclusions.

5.1. Next Steps.

The recommendations presented in this report represent the research and deliberations of members of the P2/BRTF. We acknowledge that there are still important points that need to be decided in order to implement the new Core curriculum. In light of this, this report recommends the following procedural steps:

- 1.- This report should be submitted to the faculty for ratification as soon as there is an agreement with the administration on its recommendations.

2.- The administration should also support and coordinate the constitution of an Advisory Council and the appointment for a Core Director who should start performing its functions in Fall 2022. Once this leadership structure is in place, it will be possible to effectively proceed with the implementation of the Core Curriculum.

3.- In preparation for this, the administration should fund and support faculty workshops where faculty can begin the process of creating new pathways.

4.- Once a Director and an Advisory Council are in place, they will delineate clear road-maps to implement the different elements of the Montclair Experience taking into consideration the recommendations and questions presented in this report.

5.2. Acknowledgements.

The work of the P2/BRTF received the generous support and assistance of the following individuals and offices:

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- Willard Gingerich, Provost and Vice President of Academic Affairs.
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- David Hood, Associate Provost for Undergraduate Education and Dean of University College.
- Joanne Cote-Bonanno, Associate Provost for Academic Programs and Assessment.
- Bryan Murdock, Director, Center for Community Engagement.
- Danianne Mizzy (Dean of Library Services and Library Administration).
- Catherine Baird (Online and Outreach Services Librarian).

6. Appendices

6.1. Appendix I. Rationale and Discussions.

6.1.1. Credit Requirements.

After multiple consultations with college deans, department chairs and faculty, the P2/BRTF acknowledged that it may be necessary to reduce the minimum of 40 credits for some programs who already have a high credit burden. The following is a possibility that could be considered for some programs:

To complete the Montclair Core, students will:

- Satisfy each learning outcome at least once by taking one 3-4 credit course.
- Students can complete up to 12 credits within their major.

- Complete at least 6 credits in **Effective Written Communication**, with a foundational writing course constituting 3 of those credits and the other 3 credits coming from a designated “writing-intensive course.

This alternative is offered in response to concerns of faculty members, department chairs and deans responsible for administering high-credit programs. The recommendation of a 40- credit minimum was guided by a loose principle that aimed to divide the curriculum in three roughly equal parts: Core, Major and Free electives/Minors. However, accreditation requirements put some majors well above 40 credits. Students in these programs are at a disadvantage when trying to pursue Minors and Certification programs, thus limiting their educational opportunities. This alternative seeks to maintain the principle of exposing students to the breath of the curriculum by requiring that they satisfy each learning outcome at least once (with the exception of the Writing Requirement). However, given that each course can satisfy up to two learning outcomes, students could theoretically complete their Core requirements with as few as 28 credits. Allowing students to take up to 12 credits of their Core Curriculum within their Major, builds flexibility for students to pursue educational experiences suited to their needs and interests.

It is important to keep in mind, however, that even though the structure of the Core Curriculum could allow students to complete their requirements with as few as 28 credits, this opportunity could only be realized if programs were to create courses that are properly aligned towards this goal.

6.1.2. Program Management and Assessment.

The P2/BRTF acknowledges that not all members agreed with the idea of having a director of the Core Curriculum, and one member in particular argued vigorously for a decentralized approach (See Proposal of Dr. Coutras below). It is also important to acknowledge that objections were raised with regards to the creation of a centralized faculty body with power over curricular decisions, especially one that could become dominated by the College of Humanities and Social Sciences (CHSS). This concern reveals at least two fundamental concerns at the university: 1) Justified frustration with a perceived lack of responsiveness of the prior General Education committee; and 2) A perception that all colleges did not have an equal voice in governance of the core curriculum.

On the first point: The P2/BRTF has conducted extensive research on General Education programs on a national level, and members of the task force have attended multiple conferences and conversed with Gen Ed leadership nationwide. This Task Force has concluded that many problems of past General Education programs at Montclair State and elsewhere stemmed from a lack of resources and an ad-hoc leadership structure that was not set up to ensure efficiency, transparency and accountability. With sufficient resources, committed leadership, and effective

management, we have every expectation that a Core Advisory Council will operate efficiently and effectively.

On the second point: CHSS is the largest college at the university and historically, a majority of classes within the existing program were offered by CHSS faculty. In comparison, other colleges have contributed fewer classes to the Core and even fewer full-time faculty to teach them. To address the perceived imbalance between CHSS and other colleges, one suggestion was to constitute a council within a senate-like structure and equal representation from all colleges at the university. A majority of the P2/BRTF, however, was concerned that assigning slots on the Council by College would re-create the very silos that we seek to dismantle: the best way to ensure that turf-wars or narrow interests do not interfere in the operation of the Core Curriculum, is to encourage the creation of an Advisory Council whose members are committed to the undergraduate education of *all* students. Furthermore, given dramatic differences in full-time faculty participation in the Core by college, efforts to create balance might instead compromise fair and equitable representation. Finally, given the current struggles to constitute the UUCC, it may prove challenging to recruit faculty who are not teaching in the Core to participate in its governance.

The P2/BRTF concluded that the most effective remedy to the problems that have plagued General Education programs in the past, is to encourage broader participation, engagement and collaboration in the design and management of the Core curriculum. It is in light of our past problems, and cognizant of the needs of the new Core curriculum, that we have concluded that the structure of a Director and an Advisory Council is the best suited to achieve the goal of implementing and managing the Core Curriculum program in an effective, efficient and transparent way.

6.1.3. Certification.

Several university constituents brought to the P2/BRTF a proposal to address their impression that the process of certification has in the past been inefficient, unresponsive, and not guided by expertise in the relevant fields. They suggested the following process of course certification:

For course certification, we can certify courses once per year. All proposed courses should be submitted to the Provost's Office. The Provost's Office then assigns a three-member team of faculty experts to each course proposed. The three experts cannot be from the department that proposes the course and they must have expertise in the area relevant to the course's SLOs.

While all members of the Task Force concurred on the importance of impartial faculty experts evaluating the curriculum, the suggestion of convening individual panels to evaluate potentially dozens of proposals was deemed as unwieldy. Furthermore, especially in light of improved

course system software and faculty frustration with an old, cumbersome review process, a majority of the task force desired to see certification of courses as an ongoing, year-round process. This was seen as key to maintaining faculty engagement and a fresh curriculum.

The task force is nonetheless open to the possibility of using groups of faculty experts to make recommendations to the Advisory Council. These groups would be coordinated by members of the Advisory Council, would commit to serve for a determined time period, and would only review proposals related to a single learning outcome in which they have expertise. Together with these experts, members of the Advisory Council would review course proposals and issue a recommendation for either acceptance, revision, or denial. In the case that the proposal is referred for revision or is rejected, the member of the Advisory Council should produce a written account of the rationale for the decision.

The P2/BRTF is cognizant of the benefits of engaging groups of experts in the process of certification. The model detailed above would allow for consistency, transparency and accountability. However, it would still be subject to eliciting enough faculty participation to support this effort.

6.1.4. Proposal by Dr. Constantine Coutras, Chair, Computer Science.

Phase Two Blue Ribbon Task Force Recommendations

Background

In the report delivered by the first Blue Ribbon Task Force (BRTF), the factors precipitating the reconsideration of the MSU General Education program included:

- The need for a more flexible framework capable of accommodating incremental change over time. The “Montclair Core” should not need to be overhauled every 20 years.
- The desire for one core curriculum across colleges (there are currently three sets of requirements).
- An interest in creating flexibility to allow students to declare a major as well as a double major, and/or a minor.
- Systemic issues with maintaining the “signature” interdisciplinary team-taught component of the 2002 General Education curriculum.
- NJ Legislation updating chapter 62 of Title 18A of the New Jersey Statutes (S1265, 2018) that limits baccalaureate degrees to 120 credits.
- The desire to encourage greater full-time faculty participation in the instruction of General Education courses.

- The need for better alignment with the statewide transfer articulation agreement, which waives General Education requirements for transfer students possessing Associate degrees.

The first BRTF identified four major competencies: Know, Communicate, Explore and Flourish. And then identified 14 Institution Learning Outcomes (ILOs) for achieving the four major competencies: Aesthetic and Literary Interpretation, Analyzing Cultures and Societies, Assessment of Knowledge Claims, Civic and Community Engagement, Creative Production and Expression, Effective Written Communication, Ethical Inquiry, Health and Well-Being, Interactive Communication, Plurilingualism, Quantitative and Mathematical Reasoning, Scientific Reasoning, Shared Histories and Historical Thinking, and Technological Literacy.

The first BRTF further recommends a core of 40 credits and asks for 28 of those to be taken outside of a student's major requirements. It also identified the need for 6 credits to be in Effective Written Communication.

The first BRFT report also asks for a "Montclair Experience", shared by all students, including transfer students. Students achieve the Montclair Experience through a new Student seminar, and three courses that are most likely already in the core: a foreign language course with a "world language" designation, a course with an "Anti-Oppression Analysis and Action designation", and a course that carries a "Community Engagement" designation.

The proposed large number of ILOs, together with minimum credit restrictions and IKO coverage, lead only to a Montclair Core as big as the existing general education program. In no way can it lead to a flexible framework that would promote double majors and minors/ Thus, the minimum of 40 credits should be removed and the focus shifted to covering ILOs not already covered by a major. The minimum of 28 credits outside a student's major should be reduced to 24 credits. In cases of extremely large majors, the number of credits outside the major can be further reduced with Provost's approval.

The second BRTF, considering the long history of implementing general education at Montclair State University and the need for a model based on "checks and balances" that involve multiple stakeholders, should propose a curriculum and governance structure that utilizes each stakeholder's expertise and responsibility where appropriate.

Proposed Curriculum Structure

Several ILOs are achieved by a student's major, and some by courses outside their major. The ILOs outside the major are best achieved in courses belonging to one or more "pathways".

Coherent structures of 3 to 8 courses that belong together leading towards minors and/or second majors.

Students in different majors will find that their major requirements are satisfying several and different ILOs. They must seek pathways consisting of courses outside their major to cover the rest. We propose that every student take 1 to 3 pathways adding up to at least 24 credits outside their major, preferably outside their college. A single pathway consisting of 24 credits can be allowed to cover all ILO's not completed in a major.

It is obvious that students in different majors will be seeking different pathways and will need the help of their home departments in choosing pathways that not only cover the Montclair core requirements but will also be beneficial to them in complementing their major. We thus identify a student's home department as the first stakeholder that must actively participate in the formation of pathways. Instead of some centralized committee sitting outside the academic departments trying to create pathways for all, we propose departments being innovative, talking to each other and coming up together with meaningful pathways for each other. An organic grass roots process focused on desired student experiences and skills, away from the bureaucracy of stale and ineffective centralized committees.

In the State of New Jersey pre-college students are exposed to a foreign language for up to 7 years (3 years in Middle School and up to 4 in High School). Thus, the requirement of Plurilingualism is well covered before attending MSU and should be optional at MSU. We believe it should be up to each College to decide if Plurilingualism will be required by its students or not. This also removes one of the courses required in the Montclair Experience.

The Montclair experience thus consists of the new Student seminar and two required pathway core courses with designations in "Anti-Oppression Analysis and Action designation", and "Community Engagement".

The new Student seminar should earn one credit (not included in the Montclair core) and consist of materials, information sessions and events decided by each College separately. Best practices will emerge through innovation, and Colleges should update their new Student seminar accordingly.

Transfer students with an Associate degree are exempt from the Montclair experience.

Governance

It is of extreme importance that the governance of the Montclair Core be based on "checks and balances", with each stakeholder bringing in its expertise at the appropriate stage. Thus, we propose an efficient, impartial, and streamlined decentralized model. On the other hand, a model

with a centralized committee in charge of everything would lack “checks and balances” and most likely impartiality, and thus be inappropriate.

Our model is informed by standard practice by university degree accreditation bodies and provides impartiality in certification and assessment of pathway core courses. These accreditation bodies have years of experience that has proven that there is no better way to certify or assess a course other than to randomly assign domain experts to do the job. A three member certification or assessment committee for each course should be composed of faculty experts from three different departments, and other than the department offering the course. And at least one faculty member from a department from a different college if possible.

To oversee the operation of these three-member committees that certify or assess core courses, we propose a Montclair Core Committee that is streamlined and of limited power. Its purpose is to oversee and facilitate a decentralized operation and thus should make very limited decisions. It must consist of members from every College and School (not under a College) at MSU.

When multiple stakeholders must come together to administer a common program the only acceptable structure is one that guarantees equal sitting at the table by all stakeholders. Thus, we propose a Montclair core committee with one member from each of the following:

- College of the Arts (this includes the schools under it: John J. Cali School of Music, School of Communication and Media)
- College of Education and Human Services
- College of Humanities and Social Services
- College of Science and Mathematics
- Feliciano School of Business
- School of Nursing

It is up to each College to decide how they send their representative to the Montclair core committee. The Montclair core committee meets at least once a month and its members take turns on chairing the meetings. In periods of great certification and assessment activity the committee must meet at least twice a month.

The Montclair core committee does only three things:

- A) Accepts proposals for new courses to be certified. It then assigns a three-member domain expert committee to provide a recommendation within 30 days. The three faculty experts must be from departments other than the department proposing the course. It must then accept the recommendation by the experts (in favor or against) unless it is a non-unanimous recommendation to reject the course. If the unanimous recommendation was in favor, the course is certified for 4 years. If the recommendation is in favor but not unanimous, the course is certified for only 2 years. If the course is rejected by the committee but not unanimously, the course proposer can request a new three-member committee to review the course one final time.

The committee then votes to accept or reject this request. A tie is in favor of accepting the request.

B) Assigns a three-member expert committee to provide an assessment of a certified course within 30 days. The course assessment result can either be: 1) the course is providing the ability for students to attain the specific student outcomes, or 2) the course does not provide the ability for students to attain the specific student learning outcomes. If the assessment is unanimously in favor the course is re-certified for 4 years. If the assessment is in favor but not unanimously the assessment committee must present any concerns or deficiencies found by the one member not in favor to the department offering the course, and the course is re-certified for only two years. If the assessment is not favorable a plan to correct its deficiencies must be filed with the Montclair core committee. The Montclair core committee can accept this plan or reject it and remove the course's certification. If the plan is accepted, the course is re-certified for only one year. If the course is rejected again after the one year, it immediately loses certification. Pathways affected by this action must replace the course with another certified course (or courses) covering the same ILOs.

C) Accepts proposals for new pathways. Requirements to accept a pathway proposal are: 1) the proposed pathway must include at least 3 courses and cover at least 4 student learning outcomes, 2) a pathway proposed must include courses already certified. A proposal with courses not certified yet is put on hold until all its courses are certified. The Montclair core committee can only reject a pathway on grounds that it does not provide students neither of the following two: 1) a coherent set of courses covering a specific area of study outside their major, nor 2) an additional area of study outside their major that can lead to a second major or a minor. A pathway rejection must be by majority of two thirds of the committee members. Otherwise, the pathway is approved.

The Montclair Core Committee must use a database of domain experts. To populate such a database every year, each Department or School provides their Dean a list of experts per student ILO. Evidence of expertise is included per faculty in the list. The Dean must then review the list and if in agreement send it to the Provost's office. The Provost's Office must then review again and if in agreement send the list to the Montclair core committee. This guarantees a very thorough check of a domain expert's credentials.

It is very important that each expert committee report (in favor or not) for each certification or assessment be available to any faculty member on campus. No expert faculty member can hide from their recommendations. They need to own their recommendations on certifications and assessments in front of the whole academic community.

Finally, to address Middle States accreditation, we need to keep in mind that this accreditation is based **primarily** on assessment of the majors the university offers. We can do the same for accreditation of the Montclair core. Each department should report assessment data on both its majors and (in the same way) the pathways that it offers.

The new Montclair core relies on faculty innovation to provide pathways to achieve the ILOs. The Montclair core curriculum belongs to the faculty who as experts in their fields decide about courses in their areas of expertise. And all factors precipitating the reconsideration of the MSU General Education program are satisfied.

Initial Implementation and Faculty Expert incentives

Faculty experts should be given incentives to participate in the process. The Provost's Office should decide on the amount of TCHs per course assessed or certified for each faculty expert. This is similar to the compensation received for supervising Co-ops.

The initial certification of courses and pathways will require a considerable amount of time and manpower. To help speed up this process, in addition to compensation, release time of one course per semester should be given to faculty experts willing to certify a minimum number of courses (specified by the Provost's Office) per semester, during this initial period.

Participating in certification and assessment of core courses should also be recognized as service activity towards the University.

Not all majors will transition to the new Montclair core at once. For a major to transition to the new Montclair core, the department offering the major must petition the Provost's Office providing evidence of available pathways in place to cover the ILO's not covered in the major.

It is expected that all majors will transition to the new Montclair core within 3 years of official approval of this plan by the University.

6.2. Appendix II Reference Documents.

6.2.1. [Memorandum of the Office of the Provost and Vice President of Academic Affairs, Willard Gingerich Announcing the Appointment of the Phase Two Blue Ribbon Task Force, January 27, 2021.](#)

6.2.2. [Montclair State University, Blue Ribbon Task Force Final Report on General Education Curriculum Redesign, 2019-2020.](#)

6.3. Appendix III Activities of the Phase Two Blue Ribbon Task Force.

6.3.1. [McCaffrey, Katherine, “Spring 2021 BRTF: Activities and Progress.” \(n.d.\)](#)

6.3.2. [McCaffrey, Katherine, “What’s Happening” \(n.d.\)](#)

6.4. Appendix IV Library Documents.

6.4.1. [Information Literacy.](#)

6.4.2. [Integrate Information Literacy into the Core: Plan and Resources Required.](#)

[6.5. Appendix V Learning Objectives and Rubrics.](#)