About the Process
Provost Brickhouse distributed her initial draft of the proposed *University Core Student Learning Outcomes* in August 2017. Eight of the nine outcomes presented in that draft were drawn directly from the recently-approved Core Learning Outcomes in the College of Arts and Sciences; the ninth outcome was added based on the work of the Joint Faculty Senate-Provost Task Force on the University Core Curriculum and Shared Undergraduate Experience. Dr. Brickhouse solicited University-wide faculty feedback on this first draft of the Outcomes through September 30, 2017.

After receiving faculty feedback in various forms from nearly all colleges/schools offering undergraduate programs, Provost Brickhouse and her staff reviewed all of the feedback, met with several college/school groups and academic leaders for more information about their feedback, and proceeded to make revisions. Much of the faculty feedback centered on the following concerns:

- **Clarity**
  Feedback indicated a desire for certain outcomes to evidence greater clarity and specificity of scope to ensure a reasonably shared understanding *across the University*. This was true for both the initially-published outcomes themselves and the explanatory text provided originally as an addendum to the outcomes; there was significant support for more directly including the explanatory text, even within calls for revisions to that text.

  In some cases, revisions for clarity and University-wide use manifested in adding text to an outcome; in some cases text was deleted and/or replaced. The same is also true the for explanatory text of each outcome, which is included in this final version; the explanatory text will also be used by members of the University Undergraduate Core Curriculum Committee (UUCCC) to develop more detailed rubrics to facilitate assessment of student learning of the outcomes.

- **Measurability for Assessment**
  Assessment of student achievement of these outcomes is critical: without it, we lack evidence of the impact of a SLU baccalaureate education and well-researched rationales for improving our curricula and pedagogies. Accordingly, these University Core Student Learning Outcomes must directly inform the development of a curriculum that intentionally and demonstrably advances student achievement of the Outcomes. Our ability to demonstrate that student achievement – first and foremost to ourselves – is rooted in outcomes that are clear, specific, and manifest in student achievement that we can observe or measure.

  Accordingly, some of the revisions to the Outcomes were made to address concerns about assessment. And because the explanatory text provides key context for and additional explanation of each outcome, that text was also revised to better inform the UUCCC’s development of more detailed assessment rubrics later in the process.

The result of that revision process is the updated draft offered by Provost Brickhouse below. For those interested, a *FAQ About the University Core SLOs* is also attached following the presentation of the Outcomes.

Each college/school that offers undergraduate programs is now charged to solicit and submit to Provost Brickhouse, via its own established faculty assembly processes, college/school-wide responses to the following questions:

1. **Has the updated version of the University Core Student Learning Outcomes adequately addressed previously-articulated concerns/suggested edits?** If not, please detail any outstanding concerns of your college/school.
2. Does the updated version of the University Core Student Learning Outcomes do a good job of articulating what we expect all SLU students should know, or be able to do, by the time they graduate? If not, what does your college/school suggest should be added, deleted, or revised?

Note that the requested faculty feedback is explicitly *not* to take any form of a “yes/no” vote at this time, as that would be premature without additional revisions.

All faculty feedback on this draft is due by December 1, 2017. Note that Provost Brickhouse will meet with the faculty assembly of any college/school interested in discussing this draft as faculty deliberate suggestions in this final round of revision.

After additional revisions in response to faculty feedback, the final draft of the Outcomes will be presented to the faculty assemblies/councils for a simple “Yes/No” vote on their adoption as our new University Core Student Learning Outcomes.
University Core Student Learning Outcomes

The University Core Student Learning Outcomes define the essential educational outcomes expected of all who earn baccalaureate degrees at SLU—regardless of major or college/school in which students are enrolled. These outcomes—and demonstrable evidence of student achievement of them—drive the faculty’s development and revision of the University Core Curriculum.

Reflective of the Jesuit tradition of promoting the development of the whole person, the outcomes are holistic, demanding the integration and synthesis of knowledge across and through academic disciplines/fields of study and experiential/community-based learning. And the outcomes demonstrate SLU’s expectation that our graduates will significantly advance their understanding of themselves, others, and the world we share.

The University Core Learning Outcomes are articulated in the numbered statements below; additional text that contextualizes and expands on each outcome (and which will be used to help develop more detailed assessment rubrics for each) is also provided.

I. All SLU graduates will be able to examine their actions and vocation in dialogue with the Catholic-Jesuit tradition.

Catholic-Jesuit beliefs and traditions comprise the intellectual and spiritual foundation for education at Saint Louis University. The University Core Curriculum exposes students to Catholic-Jesuit and other worldviews, and asks students to reflect upon how these worldviews inform their character, sense of purpose, and vocations. And the Core asks students to imagine and assess the moral and spiritual implications of their actions and life choices.

II. All SLU graduates will be able to integrate knowledge from multiple disciplines to address complex questions.

Developing a breadth of knowledge is the heart of a liberal arts education. SLU’s Core is grounded in the arts, humanities, informatics, mathematics, natural sciences, and social sciences—as well as other disciplines, technologies, and areas of interdisciplinary inquiry that characterize contemporary academic and professional life. The Core fosters creative ability, knowledge of the natural world, and an understanding of human cultures, institutions, and systems; it asks students to study an issue from a variety of disciplinary perspectives, and to integrate knowledge for creative and systemic inquiry.

III. All SLU graduates will be able to assess evidence and draw reasoned conclusions.

The core fosters hallmarks of a well-developed mind: the ability to gather and discern the reliability of source material, analyze data via quantitative and qualitative methods, compare multiple interpretations of evidence, evaluate conflicting claims, and demonstrate evidence-based reasoning. The Core builds a panoply of critical thinking skills—from the scientific method to the creative process, from systems thinking to the ability to think in complex abstractions.

IV. All SLU graduates will be able to effectively communicate in writing, orally, and visually.

Eloquent communication connects people and advances ideas. The Core requires students to analyze written, auditory, and visual messages to understand their meanings and implications, and to communicate effectively across a variety of media and with a clear understanding of rhetorical purpose, genre, style, and audience.
V. All SLU graduates will be able to discern the impact of community engagement on their acquisition and application of knowledge.

The Core requires students to collaborate with and learn from those in the broader community, and to reflect on the transformative benefits of community engagement. Students will learn how acquiring and applying knowledge in context – with and for others – advances more holistic, mutually transformative education.

VI. All SLU graduates will be able to evaluate how social systems advance and degrade innate human dignity.

To be a person for and with others in the Jesuit tradition requires understanding the impact of political, economic, educational, and other social forces and institutions on human opportunity and well-being – historically and today. The Core enables students to consider the nature of a just society, recognize how and when injustice is institutionalized, and identify the conditions necessary for citizenship that promotes the dignity of all.

VII. All SLU graduates will be able to analyze how the complexity of diverse identities influences their lives and the lives of others.

Multiple identities – such as national, religious, gender, racial, and class identities – shape every individual. The Core helps students assess how these identities have been constructed historically, culturally, and socially. Students will compare their own values and biases to those of people from different backgrounds, so they can step outside of themselves and connect across cultures.

VIII. All SLU graduates will be able to analyze how decisions impact interdependent social, political, environmental, or related systems.

The Core aims to develop in students the intellectual tools necessary for participation in an interdependent world as global citizens. The Core requires students to understand the systemic nature of our existence and the natural world, and how human decisions transcend national, geo-political, and other boundaries we draw.

IX. All SLU graduates will be able to collaborate with others to shepherd multiple perspectives and contributions toward a common goal.

Pursuing a common goal with others is integral to achieving a common goal for others. The Core aims to foster students’ abilities to promote positive group dynamics, resolve conflict, and leverage diversity of ideas for mutual benefit.
FAQs About the Current Draft of the University Core SLOs

What is the purpose of the “explanatory text” under each outcome?

- The outcomes themselves are written broadly enough for the University-wide community to share an understanding of them; but they are not written specifically enough that they can fully guide the University Undergraduate Core Curriculum Committee’s (UUCCC) development of detailed rubrics that the will facilitate assessment of student achievement of the outcomes. The “bridge” between the outcomes and the rubrics is the explanatory text provided here.

My college made some suggestions for revision that we don’t see in this draft. Why is that?

- Not all suggestions for revision are reflected in this updated draft. Outcomes suggested by only one unit (or that likely would garner support from only one or two units), and outcomes typically associated with specific academic majors (as opposed to an institution-wide core or general education curriculum) were not included. We drew the line at outcomes we felt best represented academic expectations of the entire University. There remain concerns that even nine outcomes are too many, although we think they are manageable and can be assessed in a multi-year cycle (see below).

- Some suggestions were for outcomes that, at their educational essence, seem to be already represented in this current draft (including suggested outcomes related to “leadership,” “innovation,” etc.); these also are not included in this current draft.

Since there are nine outcomes, does that mean there will be nine courses in the new University Core Curriculum?

- First, remember that absolutely zero work has, to date, been done to develop any element of the new University Core Curriculum that will support student achievement of these outcomes. That is a responsibility of the faculty on the newly-created University Undergraduate Core Curriculum Committee (UUCCC), which will not even meet for the first time until later in November. And since curriculum development should necessarily follow, and be a response to, the development of student learning outcomes, that timing should work fine.

- We need to fight the urge to exclusively associate a particular University Core Student Learning Outcome (SLO) with one particular course, or with courses from one particular department. The interdisciplinary, developmental, and holistic nature of the outcomes means that most of the SLOs will likely only be achieved via a student’s successful completion of multiple courses – typically over three or four years of undergraduate study, and typically spanning departments/disciplines.

- Also note that a single course might be designed to develop student achievement of more than one SLO; indeed, the nature of most of the outcomes almost demands that to be the case. When it comes to student achievement of learning outcomes and curriculum policy, there is no need for – and no sound intellectual rationale for – restricting the “double-counting” of course credit to meet multiple outcome-related curriculum requirements.

Can student achievement of these outcomes be measured?

- Yes. But there is certainly the possibility that the outcomes will need to be revised after assessment of student achievement has begun and student learning data has been collected and analyzed. It’s important to remember that assessment is a continuous and dynamic process, and one result of it is that the outcomes themselves might need to be revised.
How and when might these outcomes be assessed?

- Most assessment of student achievement of any University Core SLO would likely occur later in an undergraduate student’s academic career – typically in the senior year, or maybe later in the junior year. Results of such assessment might point to the need to also conduct some targeted assessment earlier, to identify why students might not be “on track” to achieve an outcome at an earlier, developmental stage of their academic careers.

- What “gets assessed” is student learning, as documented in academic work submitted for courses and, perhaps, for other curricular components (such as a Senior Thesis, or portfolio requirement). That academic work – collectively referred to as “artifacts of student learning” for assessment purposes – might include any of the following:
  - essays
  - presentations
  - exams (either entirely, or selected questions/sections)
  - lab reports
  - fine arts projects
  - research papers
  - creative performances
  - reflection essays
  - portfolios of multiple “artifacts”
  - capstone projects
  - clinical/practicum projects
  - service learning projects
  - etc.

Regardless, student work is evaluated against the SLOs as articulated more specifically in assessment rubrics, which will likely be developed by the faculty on the UUCCC with support from the Office of University Assessment.

Will we have to assess the work of all students, in all core courses, every year?

- Absolutely not. The primary goal of assessment is to identify the need for and, if so, direction of curriculum revision and/or changes pedagogy to improve student learning. To do that, we only need to assess artifacts from a reasonably representative sample of students (but we’ll need to discuss what constitutes “representativeness” for this purpose, choose appropriate sampling strategies, etc).

- Because student achievement toward each SLO will likely be developed in multiple courses over several years, there likely will be no “one-to-one” relationship between any given SLO and any given course. So no particular course is likely to be the subject of assessment efforts every year – unless it’s a course “tailor-made” for the core and for assessment, such as a Core senior capstone course, or Core senior thesis course/project, etc.

- Assuming nine University Core SLOs, we might choose to assess student achievement of three SLOs each year, on a three-year cycle.