Shared Governance and the Ad Hoc Core Curriculum Committee's Work

As we share out a new survey for feedback on the Proposed Core Curriculum (PCC; November 21, 2025), this document is intended to provide transparency into the deliberations of, and choices made by, the ad hoc Core Curriculum Committee (CCC) during the PCC's development.

Context of the CCC's Work

CCC Membership

Membership on the CCC was established by the interim provost, in consultation with campus stakeholders including the General Education Council, Faculty Senate, and Academic Council. It includes 21 voting members: six instructional faculty appointed by the Faculty Senate; six faculty administrators appointed by the provost (five deans and one AUH); one joint provost-Faculty Senate appointee who is an instructional faculty member; and eight representatives coming from the colleges with instructional faculty. These eight voting members self-nominated and were appointed by their college dean at the recommendation of the advisory committee of each college: eight instructional faculty including one associate dean representing University Studies and the Libraries combined.

Additionally, seven non-voting advisory members to the CCC include: the instructional faculty member chairing the General Education Council/GEC; the Vice Provost for Student Academic Success; the Vice Provost for Faculty Affairs and Curriculum; the Associate Dean for Academic Engagement of the Libraries; an Associate Vice President for Student Affairs; and two student representatives.

CCC Charge

The CCC was charged with reviewing and disseminating the proposals developed by the three summer working groups, collecting feedback on those proposals (we expanded this to include the current program and opened the discussion to topics that did not appear in any of these places), and then developing a single draft curriculum "informed by the review of the disseminated summer proposals and the feedback they received."

We were also directed by the interim provost to consider academic quality, accreditation requirements, student needs, state transfer policies, market trends, resource availability, faculty expertise, and alignment with the university's mission. We met with the interim provost as we began our work in September 2025; in November President Jim spoke to the

committee; and the interim provost spoke to the committee a second time, following the president's visit.

Academic Program Review 2022 and Resulting Reform Process

The reform process was first initiated following a 2022 Academic Program Review (APR), in which the external consultants acknowledged the many strengths of JMU's current general education program (clear mission, strong alignment with institutional identity, etc.), and identified several challenges (rigid program structure, implementation issues with bottlenecks, lack of flexibility, etc.).

The APR results recommended the development of a campus process that would invite broad campus participation in reform of the General Education program and re-examine faculty governance and administrative structures to ensure that they are sustainable and appropriate.

Following the APR process's conclusion, in Fall 2022 the former provost established the Core Curriculum Appraisal Task Force/CCATF to "lead the division through a process of consultation, discernment and innovation." The CCATF's responsibilities included forming and overseeing the 2025 summer working groups. This taskforce's work concluded in summer 2025, and leadership of renewal was passed onto the ad hoc Core Curriculum Committee (CCC) to propose the new program's curricular structure.

The CCC's Engagement with Faculty Feedback

The development of the draft proposal under review now (the PCC, drafted November 21, 2025) was shaped by campus feedback on the three summer proposals in "Survey 1." We will examine some of those results and the role they played in the committee's deliberative process.

We will start with the feedback from the Survey 1 questionnaire (204 responses, c. 80% from instructional faculty), and then expand into feedback gathered from other settings, such as forums, that are not sufficiently addressed in the survey.

Credit Hours

The faculty/respondents showed a clear preference for keeping the number of credit hours in the program relatively high, with 42% preferring 38-42 credit hours vs. 19.4% preferring 34-37; and 16.8% for 30-33 credit hours. 20.9% responded with no preference. Our proposal comes in at the low end of the 38-42 (38 credit hours) category.

Literacies & Critical Thinking

The question about digital, information, and AI literacies showed 64% of respondents answering very or extremely important. We have included in the proposal a two-credit launch course that will focus on introduction to literacies and critical thinking. The proposal provides guidance throughout the curriculum to revisit and develop the themes of literacies and critical thinking.

First-year Curricular Experience

Survey 1 respondents also showed a preference for some kind of first-year curricular experience, with 52.1% recording "extremely" or "very" important vs. 24.7% giving "slightly" or "not at all" important. Digging deeper into the responses, many of those pushing against the first- year experience had concerns about students fitting the credit hours into busy first years in many programs. We have responded with Launch, which is designed to be a flexible introductory experience that is intended to be completed within three semesters.

Upper-Division Requirement

The upper-division requirement was a little more difficult to sort. 28.4% stated that it was extremely/very important, 22.1% gave moderately important, and 49.5% answered that it is not at all or slightly important. Digging into the data showed that while many people liked the general idea, there were concerns about feasibility and implementation along with conflicts with existing capstones. In our proposal, we attempt to preserve the upside (something that ties general education experiences together at the end) while mitigating the perceived challenges. Our solution was to offer a one-credit requirement that could be completed flexibly – including that it can be easily incorporated into existing capstone projects by meeting learning objectives that consider the impact of students' cumulative general education experiences.

Wellness

Finally, Wellness and Holistic development was seen in a generally positive light, with 44.2% rating it extremely or very important, 25.8% moderately important, and 30% not at all or slightly important. The objections were focused on seeing this as trendy, and there were comments warning about ableism. Our response was to include three credits for these topics – the voiced objections from Survey 1 should be considered when developing learning outcomes.

Major Themes Across Survey 1 Feedback on the Summer Proposals

There were several clear themes embedded in the feedback for the three summer proposals as well, including:

1. calls for more flexibility for the program structure (also a take home message from the APR)
2. frustration with the removal of Science and Communication credits (loss of scientific identity was the #1 complaint of faculty across the board)
3. a call to update the program to the 21st century (digital literacies and holistic wellness) countered by concerns about jargon, branding, and trendiness
4. concerns about the practicality and implementation of the proposed capstone experiences
5. concerns about faculty workload and feasibility

We opted to make flexibility one of our key guiding principles. Our vision for this is outlined in the proposal itself, but the key idea is that required courses are defined by learning objectives and are not controlled by individual departments. It is our intention that this gives opportunities to faculty and departments to teach more gen ed courses, and that it will also help alleviate some of the backlog endemic to the current program. It should also make the program structure more adaptable as courses come in and out of the program.

We have provided only first order "learning outcomes" for the courses in the program, feeling that the specific learning objectives would be best developed by the experts in the various areas. This would occur in the next part of the process. More details are included in the proposal.

The inclusion of 1- and 2- credit block courses is also designed to allow for more flexibility for both students and faculty – for students in scheduling (especially during that first year) and for faculty to allow more innovation for some of the material.

The responses to Survey 1 questions asking for "off the menu" topics and final comments covered some of the same ground (AI, wellness, science and communication credits) but also brought in several additional ideas and concerns.

1. Career skills and preparation, practical skills
2. Civic engagement and global focus
3. Skepticism to integrated and interdisciplinary requirements
4. Faculty support and workload

We have attempted to address the career skills and preparation with the beginning of "Launch" – a one credit "Power Skills" course and a two credit "literacies and critical thinking" course. Both of these courses are intended to be introductory with explicit expansion of skills, literacies, and critical thinking reinforced throughout the other components of the PCC curriculum. Our expectation is that C&I processes established for implementation of this proposal would ensure that all PCC courses engage one or more of the program's embedded themes.

The Civic Engagement piece became a cornerstone of our proposal with the six credit Engaged Citizenship and Democracy piece. The motivation behind this is outlined in the proposal. This is something that provides identity for our general education program, directly connecting back to the Constitution and its primary author.

Our proposal neither mandates nor discourages integrated and interdisciplinary endeavors.

One topic that did not come out clearly in Survey 1 results, but was well represented in the forums, is that consideration of the ease of transfer credits is important. We have given as a principle that transfer credits should be applied liberally to PCC requirements and aligned with statewide transfer frameworks. We will continue to work towards refining this alignment and ensuring seamless transition for transfer students.

We also discussed the idea of double-counting – e.g. how much should be allowed and decided to solicit more feedback on this point – a question targeting this is included in the new survey (survey 2).