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Eric A. Hall

*Georgia Southern University*

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# Co-Learners and Core: Education Reform at Saint Joseph's College

## **Cover Page Footnote**

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## Co-Learners and Core: Education Reform at Saint Joseph's College

On June 6, 1980, educational sciences professor Malcolm Parlett sent a memorandum to Saint Joseph's College administrator John Nichols commenting on his recent visit to the school. Nichols had asked Parlett to observe the college's reformed general education curriculum and offer suggestions for its improvement. When Parlett submitted his findings, the report was filled overwhelmingly with high praise and little criticism. He wrote that Saint Joseph's College's Core Curriculum presented "flexibility that provides for replenishment of energy and interest."<sup>1</sup> Parlett noted that Core faculty "are encouraged to think in interdisciplinary terms; to read books outside of their own subject; to realize the limitations of their own disciplinary perspective...to teach in front of colleagues; and to collaborate with their peers in talking through, and worrying over, the overall structure of each Core segment."<sup>2</sup> In reference to the college's general education curriculum, Parlett recognized that "St. Joseph's was ahead of the rest of the country—Harvard in this respect can be thought of as a 'Johnny-come-lately.'"<sup>3</sup>

In the fall of 1969, Saint Joseph's College, a small, Catholic, liberal arts institution 90 miles from Chicago in Rensselaer, Indiana, replaced its traditional 54-credit general education program with a new curriculum that included interdisciplinary studies, non-Western requirements, and coursework requiring faculty to lead discussion sections outside of their fields of expertise. The college's president, Father Charles Banet, used the Second Vatican Council, which ran from 1962 to 1965, and new national literature on curriculum revision as an impetus for education reform. The college's interpretation of Vatican II, coupled with its approach to skeptical students and faculty, allowed administrators to achieve their primary goal: to alter the college's curriculum in a way that clearly distinguished it from the state's other colleges and

universities. Once Saint Joseph's College implemented the new program, it quickly became a prominent model for institutions of higher education.

The curriculum reform debates at Saint Joseph's College between 1966 and 1986 mirrored national trends in education and the Catholic Church. The implementation of the college's Core Curriculum in 1969 marked a concrete example of Vatican II's document "The Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World" applied to a local setting.<sup>4</sup> National education experts such as Earl J. McGrath and Gordon Vars found a tangible outlet for their writings on core curriculums at Saint Joseph's College, and the Core program at the institution proved to them that philosophical writings on education could become reality. Other colleges and universities visited and studied the college's Core Curriculum because it offered a model for adapting national and global literature to meet an institution's specific needs. Saint Joseph's College showed educators in the United States how to alter a curriculum to address the economic and practical needs of post-World War II society.

### **The Transformation of Higher Education**

Following the Second World War, an enormous increase in college and university enrollment forced the federal government and academic institutions to redefine the philosophy and purpose of higher education. In the fall of 1945, many returning veterans took advantage of the new G.I. Bill and enrolled in educational programs rather than reenter the workforce. By 1950, 16 percent, or two million, of all eligible veterans enrolled in postsecondary education under the bill. The G.I. Bill, in addition to flexible admissions requirements and academic recruitment, resulted in a doubling of student enrollment at many colleges and universities between 1943 and 1946. At the University of Wisconsin, for instance, the entry of 11,000 G.I.s increased the size of the student body from nine to eighteen thousand.<sup>5</sup>

As a result of the G.I. Bill and the quantitative changes that came with it, American campuses—large and small—made qualitative adjustments as well. The increasing postwar enrollments led to the construction of new laboratories, classrooms, and dormitories, and institutions reevaluated the way they considered student applications. Prompted by the Soviet launch of the satellite Sputnik in 1957, Congress passed the National Defense Education Act (NDEA), which appropriated funding devoted to scientific research at colleges and universities throughout the United States. Many institutions gave preference to specialization and vocational training instead of general education curriculums. As engineers, chemists, and physicists passed writers, philosophers, and historians in prestige and need, the federal government offered grants to public universities that expanded their science programs. In 1960, postsecondary education received \$1.5 billion in federal funding that amounted to a 100-fold increase since 1940. Former President of the University of California Clark Kerr noted that in 1960, only six universities received 57 percent of the federal funding, and only twenty universities received 79 percent. The large public universities clearly benefited most from the increase in federal science funding.<sup>6</sup>

Between 1945 and 1970, tuition-dependent private colleges and universities faced economic uncertainty in competing with public institutions. In 1947, roughly half of the 2.3-million students enrolled in 1,800 colleges and universities attended private schools. Forty years later only 23 percent of America's 12.4 million postsecondary students were enrolled in private institutions. Additionally, between 1969 and 1975, 800 new colleges and universities opened, and another 300 closed or consolidated. Public policy scholar Martin Trow argued that increased competition as a result of proliferating enrollment “resemble[d] the pattern of success and failure of small businesses in modern capitalist economies.”<sup>7</sup> He indicated that in “the United States...the supply of places has on the whole outstripped demand; and buyers at both ends,

students and the employers of graduates, have had a powerful influence on the behavior of the producers.”<sup>8</sup>

The high number of postsecondary institutions and students forced private colleges and universities to offer distinctive curriculums to compete with public universities. Historian Richard Freeland noted that the private institutions in Massachusetts—Boston College, Boston University, Tufts University, Harvard University, Northeastern University, and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT)—all responded to the new climate by emphasizing specific aspects of their programs and targeting particular constituencies. While Northeastern focused on marketing its work-study curriculum, Boston College agreed to promote Harvard’s graduate program in return for Harvard’s promotion of Boston College’s undergraduate curriculum. Outside of Massachusetts, universities such as St. John’s University and Columbia University survived in part because of their “great books” curriculums. Other colleges and universities set themselves apart from larger state universities by introducing honors programs, special-topics seminars, study abroad, independent study courses, and small class sizes. In the absence of federal funding, private colleges and universities had to alter their curriculums in creative ways between 1945 and 1970 to stay competitive with public institutions.<sup>9</sup>

In 1956, the president of the Carnegie Corporation offered Earl J. McGrath a grant to help shape and define the formal study of higher education in the United States. A professor and college administrator, McGrath’s tenure as the U.S. Commissioner of Education coincided with the implementation of the G.I. Bill, increasing focus on vocational education, and the burgeoning partnership between higher education and the scientific community. He concluded after rigorous analysis “that teaching in both liberal arts and professional programs has been too much concerned with the purveyance of subject matter and too little with its influence on the character and personalities of young people...seeking to understand the meaning of life.”<sup>10</sup> McGrath’s

time in education had convinced him that the professor's latest article, the institution's budget, and traditional academic autonomy all prevented colleges and universities from making curriculum reforms.<sup>11</sup> He explained, "I was convinced...that the undergraduate curriculum [in the United States] had to be redesigned with the purpose of providing a broader range of intellectual experiences for enlightened citizenship."<sup>12</sup>

Many scholars echoed McGrath's sentiments, concluding that the trend towards specialization created an immediate problem at American colleges and universities. Educator Jay W. Stein argued that "vocationalism" led many faculty to focus on upper-division and graduate courses, which tended to be "specialized, applied, and job-oriented."<sup>13</sup> He feared that seminal areas of study in the humanities and social sciences would spawn into more specialized departments like linguistics, sociology, or creative writing. Even in the 1940s, the federal Zook Commission contended that "liberal education has been splintered by overspecialization" and suggested that "the failure to provide any core of unity in...higher education is a cause for grave concern."<sup>14</sup> Both the Zook and Rockefeller Commissions recommended that colleges and universities focus on teaching students how to solve human problems before preparing them for the job market.<sup>15</sup>

Educator David H. Bayley also railed against "the segmentation of the American educational process," arguing that students had difficulty putting together the lessons of individual courses.<sup>16</sup> Colleges and universities, he contended, presented students with an abundance of information but never connected the material to national problems. Bayley complained that "American colleges and universities pretend to turn out functioning intellects. In most cases they turn out rote-learners frightened at giving their minds a chance."<sup>17</sup> He believed that specialization produced "[p]eople who know a lot but are very stupid."<sup>18</sup>

In the 1960s and 1970s, a number of institutions adopted core curriculums as a way to bridge the divide between scientific specialization and liberal integration. Although scholars have differed on their definition of the term core curriculum, many agree with Dmitry Suspitsin's characterization:

Within the context of higher education, the core curriculum, along with the free elective system and distribution scheme, typically represents a way of structuring undergraduate general education programs. Made up of a tightly structured and often interdisciplinary series of prescribed general education courses, a core curriculum is designed to provide a common set of learning experiences for all students at a particular institution. Core general education programs are often seen as the foundation on which more-specialized studies should rest.<sup>19</sup>

Educator Gordon Vars argued that the term core curriculum represented five different though sometimes overlapping educational models: (1) The "Distribution Requirement" model in which students take a specified number of credit hours in several academic areas: social sciences and natural sciences, among others;<sup>20</sup> (2) The "Required Course" model in which students must take a small number of specified courses;<sup>21</sup> (3) The "Correlated Course" model in which students are required to take one course after another (i.e. American history followed by American literature);<sup>22</sup> (4) The "Combined Course" model in which students take interdisciplinary courses;<sup>23</sup> and (5) The "Integrative Seminar" model in which seniors take reflective courses designed to answer life's larger questions (i.e. What should I do with my future?).<sup>24</sup> In all the models, the basic emphasis was problem solving with a weighted focus on democratic group development.<sup>25</sup>

Although proponents of core curriculums disagreed as to which model best fit a particular institution, they agreed that each core model offered a number of benefits. Educators argued "that there is an identifiable core of knowledge that a mature, intelligent, educated, and civic-minded citizen should possess if he or she is to be able to make informed political decisions, obtain access to opportunities in education or employment, and participate fully in the various



roles of social life.”<sup>26</sup> These scholars insisted that certain historical and literary works, classroom activities like debates and Socratic dialogue, and interdisciplinary coursework allowed students “to cope with life in a complex environment.”<sup>27</sup> Vars noted that core curriculums encouraged professors to serve as mentors and guides who drafted their syllabi based on the needs of and questions raised by their students. The faculty functioned as “generalists” and discussion leaders rather than authoritative lecturers.<sup>28</sup> Proponents of core programs agreed that these curriculums treated the whole student and avoided the trap of specialization.<sup>29</sup>

Opponents of core curriculums countered that a common set of coursework based on the notion of interdisciplinary education neglected the realities of Cold War America. They argued that students of the atomic age with an interest in engineering or science should not be forced to take arcane courses in literature that focused on Shakespeare or Milton. Some suggested that core curriculums forced the value system of individual institutions on students and did not respect students’ aspirations and desires. Vars acknowledged that core curriculums required a highly dedicated and selfless faculty proficient in individual and group problem solving. He conceded that “[e]ven relatively modest departures from the status quo may provoke heated controversy, as evident in the widely-reported ‘core curriculum debate’ at Harvard University.”<sup>30</sup> Core curriculums remained highly controversial in the 1960s and 1970s, and continue to draw the ire of many educators today.<sup>31</sup>

The 1966-1967 core curriculum debates at Saint Joseph’s College reflected the national dialogue over the future of general education. Beginning in the mid-1960s and continuing into the early 1980s, educators advocated the merits of core curriculums in educational pamphlets, scholarly journals, and books. Never a debate on the periphery of education circles, the movement against specialization and toward integrated liberal education eventually included McGrath. His many publications between 1956 and 1973, along with the work of other

prominent educators who argued for nationwide curriculum reform, convinced schools like Saint Joseph's College that changes were not only possible but necessary.

### **Reform Comes to Saint Joseph's College**

Within this climate of education reform, in the summer of 1965, Father Charles Banet became the 14<sup>th</sup> president of Saint Joseph's College after years of service as the institution's head librarian. More progressive than his predecessors, Banet promoted residential coeducation, and he believed in wider student representation on college committees, boards, and even the Board of Trustees. Banet wanted to make a distinctive contribution as President of Saint Joseph's College, and curriculum revision quickly became his main focus.<sup>32</sup>



Father Charles Banet seated at his desk in 1969. He became President of Saint Joseph's College in 1965 and held the position until he retired in 1993. (Courtesy *Phase*, the college's yearbook, volume 30, 1969)

The faculty and administrators at Saint Joseph's College in the late 1960s agreed that the Second Vatican Council, along with an increasing body of education reform literature, provided the impetus for the creation of the college's Core Curriculum in 1969. On January 25, 1959,

Pope John XXIII unexpectedly called for “an ecumenical council to promote the unity of all the Christian communities.”<sup>33</sup> Three years and eight months later, 2,700 bishops gathered in Vatican City for the “decisive ecclesial event of this century.”<sup>34</sup> John XXIII asked the bishops to define the relationship between the Catholic Church and the modern world and meet “the needs, hopes, joys, and fears of all people,” Catholic or otherwise.<sup>35</sup>

The Second Vatican Council, which ran from October 11, 1962 to December 7, 1965, was decisively pastoral in its focus. “Instead of simply repeating the church’s doctrine,” wrote one scholar paraphrasing John, “the Council must reclothe it to meet the needs ‘which our era demands.’”<sup>36</sup> Those needs included addressing issues of poverty, multiculturalism, liberation theology, globalization, and church hierarchy. In four constitutions, nine decrees, and three declarations, the council affirmed that “all Catholics should work together according to their proper roles for the common good of the church and its mission.”<sup>37</sup> In emphasizing collegiality and community over monarchical authority, the council recognized the importance of power sharing. The sixteen documents of the council also encouraged dialogue between Catholics, Christians, and other faiths, promoted social justice—specifically with regard to the poor—and called on Catholics to respect all heritages and cultures. Without the Second Vatican Council, “the church would have been like the Loch Ness monster; rumored to exist, of venerable antiquity, actually seen by some, but not of much relevance in the contemporary world,” concluded one of the participants.<sup>38</sup>

The end of the Second Vatican Council coincided with Father Banet’s appointment as president of Saint Joseph’s College. Soon after the council adjourned, Bishop Raymond Joseph Gallagher asked Banet to assist him in implementing the decrees of Vatican II throughout the Lafayette diocese. Banet responded by requiring all faculty members to read select council documents, one of which was “The Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World.”

He put together a series of seminars in which each academic department had to address the “anthropological concern” of Vatican II, defined as “a concern that everything that occupied the talents and resources of this College make some contribution to the understanding and the freeing of human beings.”<sup>39</sup> Banet and the faculty also focused on the council’s call for increased collegiality. An assessment of Core in 1980 noted, “The strong Biblical roots to this notion of the Church as community, of a people called together...by the Spirit, coupled with the distaste for impersonal structures in the 1960’s, gave the faculty and the administration of Saint Joseph’s College good reasons to redefine their mission as a Catholic College in terms of this reorientation in the Church’s self-definition.”<sup>40</sup>

Inspired by Vatican II, the college, under Banet’s leadership, began to envision itself as an open community with a mission of serving “the whole human family.”<sup>41</sup> In the coming years, the college implemented the decrees of Vatican II into its new Core Curriculum. The transition of faculty from authoritative lecturers to discussion leaders and “co-learners” was a direct result of the council’s statements on collegiality. Additionally, the college’s inclusion of Core courses on Latin America, Africa, Japan, China, and India directly reflected the council’s insistence that Catholic institutions engage other faiths and cultures.

In addition to Banet’s six “Presidential Seminars,” in which each department had to defend the existence of a Catholic college and the need for its particular academic subject, he also created a Curriculum Revision Committee (CRC), composed of thirteen faculty members under the direction of Purdue University’s Richard Grabau, to study the curricula of other colleges. With the aid of a \$38,493 federal Department of Health, Education, and Welfare (HEW) grant, the committee spent five weekends discussing curriculum revision and identifying a workable general education model with students and other faculty.<sup>42</sup>

By 1967, the CRC issued a report that proposed the elimination of the current general education program at Saint Joseph's College. The committee's report found that "a sizable group of faculty were acutely aware of a contradiction between what they were actually doing in the classroom and what their goals and purposes claimed what they were supposed to be doing to impart a liberal education to students."<sup>43</sup> The committee first noted that the college promoted specialization by allowing faculty members to teach courses strictly in their areas of expertise. The CRC contended that a disconnect existed between faculty who focused their attention almost exclusively on their own academic subjects and students whose interests were multifaceted and oftentimes pragmatic. The committee adamantly believed that in any reformed curriculum a student "must see that different individuals coming at a subject from different special backgrounds can bring to a variety of topics a variety of methods, insights and implications, and can communicate with each other."<sup>44</sup>

The recommendations of the CRC centered on the incorporation of interdisciplinary studies, recognizing the humanity of each student, and transforming the faculty from a group of experts to a community of "co-learners." The committee explained that the "central message in the very structures [of what would become Core] is that general education is not something to 'get out of the way' before going on to the 'real work' in the major, but rather that general education is at least as important as the major."<sup>45</sup> As a result, the CRC recommended that the college replace its 54-credit general education program with a 45-credit "Core" curriculum that extended through all four years of college. To illustrate its commitment to providing a worldly education, the committee suggested that Saint Joseph's College make non-Western history and philosophy mandatory for all students, and one of its curriculum goals included "expand[ing] awareness to the many dimensions of reality."<sup>46</sup> The CRC argued that a general education program "should provide some sense of who we—and the individual student—are or is, how we

got to be what we are, and how we are related to at least some other culture besides our own Western civilization.”<sup>47</sup> Finally, the CRC advised that the college divide Core sections into two hours of lecture and two hours of discussion per week. Nichols summed up the new role of the faculty:

As a lecturer in the Auditorium meetings, the professor presents himself or herself as an expert in commenting on a reading assignment or a related topic in a scholarly yet pedagogically appropriate fashion. In the discussion session, however, the professor often has to assume the position of a co-learner, since the topic under discussion may well come out of a field of study which is not one’s own area of specialization.<sup>48</sup>

Under the Core Curriculum, for instance, professors of chemistry or biology would find themselves leading discussion sections on literature, history, and philosophy.

In practice, the committee proposed a complete elimination of the existing general education model. In its place, the CRC presented a new curriculum that combined elements of three of Gordon Vars’ educational templates: the “Correlated Course,” “Combined Course,” and “Integrative Seminar” models.<sup>49</sup> Beginning with Core 1: The Contemporary Situation, each student would attend two one-hour lectures per week held in a large auditorium and two one-hour discussion sections led by faculty members from a variety of disciplines. Students would take Cores 1 and 2 in their freshmen year, Cores 3 and 4 in their sophomore year, Cores 5, 6, 7, and 8 in their junior year, and Cores 9 and 10 in their senior year. Other than Core, students would not be required to enroll in general education courses such as a typical English 101. Instead, students were free to take courses in their majors and minors as first-semester freshmen. Under the proposed Core Curriculum, the process of inquiry-guided learning with faculty serving as “co-learners” was just as important as the material learned in a particular Core course.<sup>50</sup>

## Implementing and Debating the Core Curriculum

Many students reacted positively to the proposed curriculum revisions. Student Association President Jim Stoup acknowledged in November 1968 “that the [course assignment] standards of academics at Saint Joseph’s were ‘below normal’ when compared to the standards of other Midwest, small Catholic institutions.”<sup>51</sup> Agreeing that curriculum changes were needed, Stoup reasoned, “Saint Joseph’s College must start on a program of advanced academics in order to bring the college to an average level of academic performance.”<sup>52</sup> An October 1968 editorial in *Stuff*, the college’s student newspaper, declared, “one of the most dramatic and most important changes in recent years will affect Saint Joseph’s College if the faculty approves the proposed curriculum revision in November.”<sup>53</sup> The editorial praised the CRC and Banet for analyzing what changes the college needed to ensure that education became “more relevant to the student.”<sup>54</sup> In a letter-to-the-editor, senior James Lefler remained optimistic that any curriculum changes would “offer greater opportunities for personal self-realization.”<sup>55</sup> He hoped “that the trends of change now appearing in the overall fabric of our college in future days will find our college not only ‘one mile south of Rensselaer’ but really and truly ‘twenty-five years ahead of most thinking.’”<sup>56</sup> Lefler encouraged the faculty “not to rest” until Saint Joseph’s made “the classroom encounter real, relevant, and alive.”<sup>57</sup> He warned that even under a new curriculum, some faculty and students might focus too heavily on letter grades and not enough on the act of learning. Like other students and faculty, Lefler held “high hopes for the future of SJC.”<sup>58</sup>

Although *Stuff* adamantly supported curriculum revision, the newspaper remained skeptical that the proposed changes were the right solutions. One editorial worried that the new Core program would make it difficult for students to transfer into and out of the college. Would students, for instance, have to take an additional one or two years of coursework if their previous transcript did not meet the Core requirements? The editors at *Stuff* wondered if transferring

problems would hinder the college's recruiting efforts, resulting in the loss of good students to Ball State University, Purdue University, and other local colleges.<sup>59</sup> Aside from transfer requirements, an editorial in *Stuff* noted, "[I]ast spring there was an effort to involve the student body in the formation of this proposal. This fall, when the proposal is receiving close inspection by individual departments and divisions, student opinion has not been actively sought out."<sup>60</sup> The paper strongly urged the CRC to consult the student body because students were the ones "who will have to face the ultimate effects of a major curriculum revision."<sup>61</sup>

Responding to student criticism, the college used a national "Time Out" project supported by the National Student Association (NSA) to discuss a range of academic and campus life issues on October 29, 1968. One of the panels, composed of students, faculty, and administrators, was titled "Academics at Saint Joseph's College—Is it Time for a Change?" It promised to disseminate the findings of the CRC and invited students to offer alternative solutions to the question of curriculum reform. The panel hoped to tackle two questions posed by contributors to *Stuff*; firstly, "... [I]s this [the Core Program] really the only course of progress open to the college?," and secondly, "Will the core curriculum demand more of Saint Joseph's in teaching ability and student quality than it can supply?"<sup>62</sup> *Stuff* never printed the results of the "Time Out" panel. Although it is impossible to tell whether the panel actually considered student opinion, what is clear is that faculty and administrators responded to student criticism by making students more aware of the proposed curriculum changes.<sup>63</sup>

After discussing curriculum reform with the student body, the CRC focused on convincing skeptical faculty that change was necessary. Led by professors Robert Wood and William Kramer, the CRC successfully disseminated the proposal to the faculty and worked behind the scenes to garner support for the new program. Described by many as a renaissance man, Kramer was an architect, chemist, editor, and musician who used his cosmopolitan



experiences to sell the benefits of interdisciplinary education to resistant faculty members. Future Core Director John Nichols explained that “the Curriculum Committee did a masterful job with feasibility studies. When it came to the final vote of the Faculty Assembly, everyone was well informed on what would happen to schedules, teaching loads, [and] departmental courses.”<sup>64</sup> The vote on Core, supported by years of research and academic discussion, passed in November 1968 by a 54-to-17 tally, with 85 percent of the faculty agreeing to the complete curriculum revision. The college named Kramer its first Core Director, and the freshman class of 1969-1970 was the first to enter under the new requirements.<sup>65</sup>

In its final form, the college modeled the Core Curriculum after a similar general education program at Florida Presbyterian College (now Eckerd College). The Core Program at Saint Joseph’s College consisted of ten courses labeled Cores 1-10 that included: (1) The Contemporary World; (2) The Roots of Western Civilization; (3) The Christian Impact on Western Civilization; (4) The Modern World; (5-6) Man in the Universe; (7-8) Non-Western Studies; (9) Toward a Christian Humanism; and (10) Christianity and the Human Situation. Each class included roughly eighteen students to one professor, and Nichols concluded, “a manageable size of about 1,000 students; a large (90 percent) residential population of students; [and] a rural location which resulted in that almost all of the faculty were full-time and lived within a three-mile radius of one another and of the College” contributed to Core’s initial success.<sup>66</sup>

Yet a number of faculty members criticized Core’s implementation on both principled and logistical grounds. A March 20, 1969 article in *Stuff* quoted Assistant Professor of Speech John Ravage who “claimed that there [had] not been an ‘institutional commitment’ to involve department chairmen in deciding core course content.”<sup>67</sup> Chairman of the History Department Donald Shea voiced similar objections in questioning the committee’s awareness of various

department facilities and wishes. He argued that vital topics and texts had been omitted from the proposed syllabus of Core 1: The Contemporary World. Those in the Faculty Assembly who spoke with *Stuff* agreed that the majority of the administrative disagreements involved the content of individual Core sections.<sup>68</sup> Almost immediately, some faculty objected to teaching courses outside of their fields of expertise, and others argued that Core was an unworkable model that did not meet the standards of higher education. Even Core's proponents conceded that several professors struggled with lesson planning and teaching. The college faced difficulty in trying to convert longtime lecturers into discussion leaders. A number of veteran faculty members had trouble conducting discussion sections, and a few refused to do anything other than lecture. Some professors consistently led stream-of-conscious conversations that rarely engaged the material at hand. In spite of those early obstacles, most other faculty members remained cooperative and willingly worked under the new curriculum. Nichols noted that the majority of Core's opponents had not yet taught classes in the new program and resisted change simply on principle and hearsay.<sup>69</sup>

In a February 1969 memorandum to Gatto and Kramer, Ravage wrote a blistering critique of the new curriculum in announcing his resignation from the Core Committee. In making a structural and substantive argument against Core, he explained that the Core Committee had "distressed" him ever since the curriculum's implementation and announced that "I have tried to articulate my disapproval of some of its decisions during the meetings, but I have been met with an attitude of 'your remarks are either unnecessary or asinine.'"<sup>70</sup> Ravage argued that the faculty devoted too little time to the Core syllabi, had not prepared faculty to serve as discussion leaders, and focused inadequate attention on student writing. Ravage was particularly concerned that the "discussion leaders are assumed to have expertise in areas in which they have no academic background."<sup>71</sup> He explained:

Some committee members seem to not be bothered by this—contesting that we will glean sufficient expertise from separate lectures from various experts to allow us to lead discussions. I argue that my background in philosophy, sociology, and theology is sufficiently weak so that it would not take merely an added lecture and a book to bring me up to a reasonable level of competence—it would take an undergraduate degree.<sup>72</sup>

Ravage applauded Kramer's effort but reasoned that "I cannot, in good faith, continue with this committee if the rush, rush, rush attitude continues."<sup>73</sup>

Like faculty, students voiced a variety of concerns about the Core Curriculum in the pages of *Stuff*. Mickey Healey, the Freshman Representative to the Core Committee, wrote a letter-to-the-editor in 1970 arguing that Core had been a near failure in its first semester. He wrote, "[the] experiment, [the freshmen] were told, was to be called the Core Program. And the Core Program, it was said, would be a reflection on the human situation. Far from reflecting on the human situation—it created one."<sup>74</sup> Healey argued that the freshmen class of 1969-1970 knew little or nothing about the Core program before they agreed to attend Saint Joseph's College. He insisted that the "students who were to be the program's guinea pigs were told the name of the course they would be taking, but they were told little else."<sup>75</sup> Healey accused the Core Committee of operating in secrecy and not allowing its student representatives to voice their concerns. He admitted that the "freshmen, for their part in the drama, did not reveal the fact that they had not the slightest inkling of what was expected of them by the course; and the faculty, as if on cue, did not let on that they had not the slightest idea what they were supposed to expect from the students."<sup>76</sup>



Freshman Mickey Healey (second from right) pictured with the Black Student Union in 1969. (Courtesy *Phase*, volume 30, 1969)

Healey charged that some members of the faculty were not interested in acting as “co-learners,” but instead remained uncompromising and overly authoritative. He noted on many occasions that the professor acting as “a group discussion leader would almost violently clash with the outlook of the majority” of his students.<sup>77</sup> Healey argued that the faculty did not do enough to resolve their own differences and keep quiet any academic or personal rifts. He explained that it was widely evident to students whenever two or more faculty members disagreed. Healey described one incident in which “the conservative and liberal wings of the Core faculty represented by Fr. Shea and Mr. Babione respectively clashed in the auditorium over such-an-all-very-immediate problem as the positive and negative values of a pass/fail system...a problem about which the majority of freshmen could not have cared less about at the time.”<sup>78</sup> Calling the program “last semester’s circus,” Healey suggested that Core faculty incorporate more videos and panel discussions into the classroom to make Core a more rewarding experience.<sup>79</sup>

Between 1969 and 1972, students expressed a number of concerns about the Core Program. Freshman Don Blake complained in 1969 that many students displayed little enthusiasm for Core, misbehaved in lecture, and focused too heavily on making good grades. Commenting on the question-and-answer session at the end of lecture, Blake noted, “with the present attitudes of the kids in the class, questions are poor and few, and the attention paid to them is even worse.”<sup>80</sup> He explained that some students left lecture early on one occasion believing they might miss the better lunch offerings at the dining hall. Junior James Guzzaldo echoed Blake’s statement about the overzealous appetites of the freshmen in complaining, “I have been listening to freshmen complain about how boring Core classes are; but then when something worthwhile is brought to them, they leave for lunch.”<sup>81</sup>

In an October 7, 1971 editorial in *Stuff* titled “Core A...Core F,” the newspaper summarized the problems of the then three-year-old Core Curriculum. It criticized the poor quality of the Science Cores (5 and 6):

Unfortunately the science phase of Core for Juniors hasn’t been very appealing. In general the movie lectures have been an insult to a college audience. For the money paid we should receive much more than inaudible movie lectures of 1950 vintage. At one of the movie lectures we took a head count and found that less than one third of the Junior class was present. Of those, few seemed to be attentive.<sup>82</sup>

The editorial accused the faculty of lecturing on material “on a level unfamiliar to most students” and explained that the “deliveries have been boring.”<sup>83</sup> Although it did complement History Professor John Posey’s art displays in conjunction with the non-Western Cores, the editorial took a very negative view of the Core Program.<sup>84</sup>

In the winter of 1972, the faculty formally recognized Core’s deficiencies and created a Core Study Committee (CSC), which “was given authority to examine any and all phases of CORE and its operation, and to make specific recommendations to the Cabinet.”<sup>85</sup> The CSC included faculty members Bernard J. Meiring, John Nichols, and David H. Hoover, along with

two students, Daniel Bradley and Celeste Rueve. Hoover explained, “[w]hen we decided to undertake the project, we limited ourselves to two major concerns: the administration and structure of the program, and how each semester of CORE fit into the total program.”<sup>86</sup> The CSC found that there was a “vagueness of administrative authority” and a lack of coordination between faculty and individual Core section directors.<sup>87</sup>

The final CSC report, issued in 1972, made a series of recommendations focusing on increased administrative control. The report suggested that “the vice-president for academic affairs establish and participate in machinery designed to insure a reasonable attempt on the part of the faculty to ‘put as much effort into CORE’ as into other courses in any major field.”<sup>88</sup> The CSC also advised that the Core Director assign “a particularly strong faculty” to Core 1 “to set a positive attitude toward CORE in the minds of the students.”<sup>89</sup> Chairman of the Student Association Academic Affairs Committee Ronald Golumbeck was pleased “that the recommendation that student representation be given high priority for the CORE... ‘allows permanent involvement of students in the planning and evaluating of CORE.’”<sup>90</sup> An article in *Stuff* noted that many of the CSC’s final recommendations were enforced by the Academic Cabinet.<sup>91</sup>

### **Assessing Core**

In 1973, the college hired John Nichols from its philosophy department to take over as the new Core Director. As a tireless advocate for the improvement of Core at Saint Joseph’s and the dissemination of the program nationally, Nichols wrote twenty-four articles on philosophy and liberal education, organized workshops to showcase Core, and brought in education experts to help assess the Core Curriculum. His own informal observations of Core led him to believe that the program created a feeling of community among the faculty and student body. He wrote,

“[our] students have a common fund of knowledge—somewhere over one hundred of the same books read by their senior year!—which all share, no matter what their field of specialization.”<sup>92</sup> He noted that the “content of Core readings, lectures, discussions and special events sparks conversations in the dining hall, in the residence halls and elsewhere.”<sup>93</sup> Although a number of reports on Core highlight the significance of the individual readings, Nichols and others emphasized the intellectual community facilitated by a common set of readings. In other words, the fact that everyone read Voltaire was more important than the content of Voltaire’s work. The Core program forced Saint Joseph’s faculty to work together to agree to a common set of readings and lectures for each Core section. Unlike many other colleges, the faculty sat in on their colleagues’ lectures and “thrashed out their understandings and misunderstandings of Core materials over coffee or lunch or in meetings.”<sup>94</sup> In 1980, Nichols proudly reported that 60 percent of faculty had at least a percentage of their course load in Core and another 27 percent who did not lead discussion sections gave lectures. Only one department did not have any of its faculty in Core, and 87 percent of faculty participated in the program in one way or another.<sup>95</sup>



Core Director John P. Nichols in 1986 (Courtesy *Phase*, volume 47, 1986)

Since the implementation of Core in 1969, students, faculty, and outside observers have recognized the program for its cutting-edge curriculum and the sense of community it fosters. Student assessment of the program has remained mostly positive. Educational consultant Malcolm Parlett visited the college at the request of Nichols and spent six days on campus training faculty members how to interview students as part of the internal review of the program. When the faculty completed their interviews in 1980, they found ample evidence of skills development and expanding personal awareness among students. One student commented that there “was no let up” as s/he progressed from Cores 1-10, and another remarked, “I detected development in myself.”<sup>96</sup> The interviewers concluded that “Non-Western Core was credited with making students aware of their own ethnocentrism and stereotypes, leading to appreciation of other cultures.”<sup>97</sup> Referring to an increased sense of self-confidence, one student said, “I was forced to look at where I stand and to defend my position.”<sup>98</sup> The students also believed that faculty in the position of co-learners facilitated rather than inhibited discussion. One student noted that the faculty “really listen! They not only take my ideas seriously but assist me in developing *my* ideas!” Faculty showed another student that “[d]isagreements are good, when handled as they are in Core discussions; I’ve learned that different isn’t necessarily wrong.”<sup>99</sup> One Core participant summed up the results of the interviews when s/he said that Core was “better integrated, had more variety, and confronted more important issues” than other general education programs.<sup>100</sup>

The assessment results indicated that most students and faculty believed in the role of the professor as a “co-learner.” The interviewers “found out that the troublesome ‘co-learner’-relationship between faculty and students was what students primarily used to rate a professor and a discussion group. When present, it made everything positive; when absent, all ratings went down.”<sup>101</sup> A study of Core conducted during the 1976-1977 academic year found that the co-



learner relationship increased student tolerance, altruism, responsibility, and complexity. Sigrid Hutcheson of the University of Michigan wrote in her March 19, 1980 report for North Central Accreditation that faculty “observed that when they were teaching in the disciplinary field they were expected to know the answer to any question a student raised. In Core they are also learners, and hence, they are willing to confess they do not know but are facilitators to try to find out.”<sup>102</sup> One anonymous faculty member echoed Hutcheson in admitting that “[f]ifteen years ago I was King of the Mountain; today I have to listen to my colleagues.”<sup>103</sup> Another confessed, “I was 40 years old before I took the non-western world seriously.”<sup>104</sup> Hutcheson ended her report with the following comments:

There are about 700 colleges around the country with no more selectivity of students and no higher faculty credentials than St. Joseph. However, no other college has a program like Core. One factor in Core’s success appears to be the strong leadership Core has enjoyed since its origins. There have been a number of individuals who were willing to be the pioneers, to take the risks, and further have been willing to do the work necessary to make the dreams become realities.<sup>105</sup>

The internal and external reviews revealed that the Core Program has had a positive impact on students and faculty.<sup>106</sup>

National publications, leading figures in education, and other colleges have also recognized the Core program for its innovative and interdisciplinary curriculum. In 1979, the college received a \$40,000 grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities to support a workshop on the Core Curriculum. Held on June 3-8, the college welcomed eighty-two participants from forty other colleges and universities including, Miami University (Ohio), the University of Akron, the University of Portland, and the University of Alabama.<sup>107</sup> Gordon Vars attended as an officer of the National Association for Core Curriculum and praised the college for its willingness to “lay itself open and share the experiences derived from a decade of teaching Core.”<sup>108</sup> He wrote in the newsletter *The Core Teacher*: “One of the most outstanding

conferences ever held on core curriculum took place this spring at St. Joseph's College, Rensselaer, Indiana, June 3-8."<sup>109</sup>

In addition to the 1979 national workshop, Core has drawn the attention of national audiences through widely-read educational publications. McGrath prominently featured the Core Curriculum in his 1976 book *General Education and the Plight of Modern Man*. His decision to include Saint Joseph's College in a book that examined only a select number of other institutions revealed McGrath's belief that other colleges and universities could learn from the Core Program. He examined the content and teaching pedagogy of Cores 1-10 and discussed how the Core program both reflected and influenced the national dialogue on education reform. In relation to national trends, McGrath noted, "Core expressed the judgment of the whole Saint Joseph's College community that general education is at least as important as the student's major."<sup>110</sup> He affirmed, "[i]n order to offset the trend toward hyper-specialization or vocationalization in most of our American higher education, Core is strongly generalist and humanistic."<sup>111</sup> McGrath explained that Core offered students a common experience by incorporating a blended "range of academic disciplines and methods."<sup>112</sup>

A number of other publications have also highlighted the Core Curriculum. A press release from Lincoln, Nebraska on the Fund for the Improvement of Postsecondary Education's LEVA Project noted that "Saint Joseph's Core program itself is elegant and conceptually beautiful...these faculty members are really remarkable people. They are willing to take risks and spend a lot of time on something that may have few rewards in the traditional sense."<sup>113</sup> In a letter to Nichols, educator Clifton F. Conrad of the College of William and Mary mentioned his reference to Saint Joseph's College in *The Undergraduate Curriculum*. He commented, "I have looked at many, many of the new core curricula and, in my judgment, I find your program a marvelous integrative attempt to revitalize liberal education."<sup>114</sup> In the article "Where Does

Harvard Lead Us?,” literary scholar Barry O’Connell included Saint Joseph’s College in the same context as the University of Pennsylvania in offering praise about the direction of general education. *FORUM* examined Core as the cover story of its October 1977 issue, and education expert Carol H. Shulman considered it alongside Harvard in her article “Revamping Core Curricula.”<sup>115</sup>

In 1984, Saint Joseph’s College received widespread recognition when Zelda Gamson examined Core in her book *Liberating Education*. Gamson, a former member of the National Institute of Education study group on excellence in higher education, included Saint Joseph’s in a group of fourteen colleges and universities on the cutting-edge of education reform. Her book featured interviews with students and faculty along with her own assessment of the Core Curriculum. Like the college’s internal assessments, Gamson found that Core helped “improve reading, writing, speaking, listening, managing information, and thinking.”<sup>116</sup> She commented on junior geobiology major John O’Brien’s experiences under Core:

[O’Brien] drew an analogy between his academic experiences at Saint Joseph’s and an ellipse. His education had two focal points, Core and his major. He thought the curriculum at other schools was shaped more like a circle, with the major in the center and general education at the circumference. At Saint Joseph’s, studies in general education and the major reinforced each other.<sup>117</sup>

Gamson’s student assessment also noted that Saint Joseph’s students who had friends or family at other colleges and universities declared the Core program superior to the curricula of their schools.<sup>118</sup>

Gamson credited the faculty for the creation of Core and wrote, “[i]t is extraordinary that Saint Joseph’s College should have come up with and taught since 1969 one of the most intellectually exciting general education curricula to be found anywhere in this country.”<sup>119</sup> Echoing the sentiments of the North Central review, Gamson quoted one faculty member who remarked, “I don’t plan a Core course all alone; I have to do it in anguished and exasperated

dialogue with a whole set of other prima donnas who are just as pin-headed as I am in virtue of *their* training, except that they have *other* specialties.”<sup>120</sup> The anonymous faculty member believed that debate over Core course content led to the creation of a holistic curriculum.

Gamson explained that in a time when many schools were reluctant to alter their entire curriculum, Saint Joseph’s College risked the standing of the whole institution to make their program unique. In an afterword to Gamson’s book, sociologist David Riesman commented, “[o]f the institutions whose efforts toward liberating education are reported or refracted in this volume, the only one that embraces the whole undergraduate curriculum is the Core at Saint Joseph’s College in Rensselaer, Indiana.”<sup>121</sup> Gamson noted that when other colleges and universities “were throwing out even the weakest of general education requirements, Saint Joseph’s College was working out demanding requirements.”<sup>122</sup> In praising Saint Joseph’s, she argued, “[w]hether or not they were in step with the rest of higher education at the time was irrelevant to the faculty and administrators at Saint Joseph’s. The adoption of Core was an act of self-definition, conducted at first without large grants or national publicity.”<sup>123</sup>

Despite the acclaim that Core has received, both formal and informal assessments have identified a number of shortcomings in the Core Curriculum. In a letter to Nichols, three educational consultants from the University of Michigan who had visited the school concluded that Core “is not perceived as attracting students to the college” even though Core was “a central component of the St. Joseph’s community.”<sup>124</sup> The Michigan group, who based their report, in part, on student interviews, spoke to a number of students who questioned the role of faculty members as co-learners instead of experts. Two minority students in particular did not believe that Core engaged them as individuals, perhaps as much a criticism of the college’s overwhelmingly white faculty and student body as Core itself.<sup>125</sup> Gamson discovered similar problems. “Prospective students,” she wrote, “have undoubtedly been turned away from the

college because of the rigid requirements of Core, and vocationally minded and insecure students must be persuaded regularly that Core is worth their time.”<sup>126</sup> A few departments, such as business and physical education, initially refused to participate in the program. Critics of Core (and Core’s assessment) also pointed out that the college often presented reviewers and accreditors with its most accomplished students, increasing the chances that those students would speak favorably of Core.<sup>127</sup>

Yet the negative assessments of Core remain far fewer than the program’s strengths. Informally, other colleges and universities have tried to incorporate the elements of Core into their own general education curriculums. Faculty and administrators from Mercer University, Saint Anselm’s College, and Denison College, among others, have traveled to Rensselaer to observe the Core program firsthand. By 1980, colleges and universities had made 80 requests for information about Core.<sup>128</sup>

### **Conclusion: Where Core Stands Today**

From its implementation in 1969, the Core Curriculum at Saint Joseph’s has made an impact on its students, faculty, and higher education institutions across the United States. The highly innovative program both challenged and reflected national trends in general education, a decision which has since led to wide acclaim among educators. The college made a commitment to “co-learning,” interdisciplinary studies, and the recognition of the humanities in its coursework and faculty. Saint Joseph’s responded to the challenges of post-World War II America by adapting the national literature in education and the Catholic Church to meet its own needs. Other colleges and universities have used the Core Curriculum as a model for their own programs, and Saint Joseph’s College continues to be recognized in academic publications and

by educational institutions. The Templeton Foundation recently named Saint Joseph's a "character-building college," and the Princeton Review labeled it a "best Midwestern college."<sup>129</sup>

In a time of distance learning, proliferating online courses, and university lectures consisting, at times, of 400-500 students, the Core Curriculum remains relevant and instructive to the demands of higher education. The Core Program's interdisciplinary make up and focus on multiculturalism and the global economy ensures that graduates enter the workforce with an understanding of labor, social justice, and ethics. Alumni have reported that Core has helped them in the promotion process by introducing them to multiple skills that stretch across disciplines. The college continues to receive requests for information about Core, and Saint Joseph's has set up a webpage to meet these demands. Yet as more and more students seek schools with online courses and evening sessions, Core requires, with some exceptions, a four-year commitment. And there is still no quantitative data showing that Saint Joseph's students are hired and succeed at higher rates than their peer institutions, despite positive testimonials from its alumni. It is clear, however, that the college stands as a clear alternative to other schools in Indiana and elsewhere.<sup>130</sup>

Forty-three years after Core's debut in 1969, the program remains almost fully intact. A freshman entering Saint Joseph's College in the fall of 2012 will take Cores 1-10, beginning with "The Contemporary Situation" in their first semester and concluding with "Seminars in Christian Humanism" the semester before they graduate. He or she will attend two hours of lecture in the college's large auditorium and two hours of discussion with 15-20 of their peers, in which trained chemists, economists, and musicians lead conversations on Shakespeare, The Middle Ages, and Buddhism. The only changes to Core since its implementation involve course content. The college has added courses on Latin America, Africa, and India to help students "engage in our multi-cultural society and our global economy."<sup>131</sup> And in "The Contemporary Situation,"

for instance, books on Motown and Tupac Shakur have replaced *The Great Gatsby* and *The Color of Water*. While most of Core's pioneers have long since retired or passed away, John Nichols remains on the faculty, as committed to Core as he ever was.

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## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> Malcolm Parlett, to John Nichols, 6 June 1980, Transcript in the General Collections, Keith and Kate Robinson Library, Saint Joseph's College, Rensselaer, Indiana (hereafter GCKKRL).

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>4</sup> "The Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World" encouraged all Catholic officials (bishops, priests, deacons, nuns, etc.) to act as servants in spreading the gospel of Christ. The document stated that the Church shared the "joy and hope, the grief and anguish of contemporary humanity, particularly of the poor and afflicted." Saint Joseph's College modeled its non-Western Core courses on the tenets of this constitution.

<sup>5</sup> John R. Thelin, *A History of American Higher Education* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2004), 262-264; Martin A. Trow, "American Higher Education: Past, Present, and Future," in Lester F. Goodchild and Harold S. Wechsler, *The History of Higher Education*, 2nd ed. (Needham Heights, Massachusetts: Simon & Schuster Custom Publishing, 1997), 571-72; Richard M. Freeland, "The World Transformed: A Golden Age for American Universities, 1945-1970," in Goodchild and Wechsler, *The History of Higher Education*, 589-90; For more on the G.I. Bill see Edwin Kiester, Jr., "The G.I. Bill May Be the Best Deal Ever Made by Uncle Sam," *Smithsonian* 25 (Fall 1994): 128-39; Milton Greenberg, *The GI Bill: The Law that Changed America* (New York: Lickle Publishers, 1997); and Suzanne Mettler, *Soldiers to Citizens: The G.I. Bill and the Making of the Greatest Generation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005).

<sup>6</sup> Thelin, *A History of American Higher Education*, 265-8, 277-80; John Aubrey Douglass, *The California Idea and American Higher Education: 1850 to the 1960 Master Plan* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000), 198-222; For more on the implications of Sputnik in the United States see Paul Dickson, *Sputnik: The Shock of the Century* (New York: Walker Publications, 2001); and Robert A. Divine, *The Sputnik Challenge* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993).

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 574.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>9</sup> Richard M. Freeland, *Academia's Golden Age: Universities in Massachusetts, 1945-1970* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992); Thelin, *A History of American Higher Education*, 290, 294-6.

<sup>10</sup> Earl J. McGrath, "Fifty Years in Higher Education: Personal Influences on My Professional Development," *Journal of Higher Education* 51, no. 1 (Winter 1980): 88.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 83.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 81; President Truman appointed McGrath as Commissioner of Education in 1949, and he served until 1953. McGrath's 1976 book *General Education and Plight of Modern Man* prominently featured Saint Joseph's College.

<sup>13</sup> Jay W. Stein, "Administering Liberal-General Education for All Students," *Journal of Higher Education* 41, no. 6 (Summer 1970): 451.

<sup>14</sup> Freeland, "The World Transformed," 593.

<sup>15</sup> In addition to the Zook and Rockefeller Commissions, the famous Harvard "Redbook," published in 1945 by the Harvard Committee on General Education, argued that general education should "look first of all to [the student's] life as a responsible human being and citizen" (593). For other examples and arguments in favor of core curriculums see Daniel Bell, *The Reforming of General Education: The Columbia College Experience in Its National Setting* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1966); William Van Til, *Issues in Secondary Education* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1976), 196-213; and Gordon F. Vars, ed., *Common Learnings: Core and Interdisciplinary Team Approaches* (Scranton: Intext Publishers, 1969).

<sup>16</sup> David H. Bayley, "The Emptiness of Curriculum Reform," *Journal of Higher Education* 43, 8 (Fall 1972): 594.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 600.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 595.

<sup>19</sup> Dmitry Suspitsin, "Core Curriculum," in James J.F. Forest and Kevin Kinser, *Higher Education in the United States: An Encyclopedia*, vol. 1 (Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO, Inc., 2002), 134.

<sup>20</sup> Gordon F. Vars, "Designs for General Education: Alternative Approaches to Curriculum Integration," *Journal of Higher Education* 53, no. 2 (Spring 1982): 217-8.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 218.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 219-20.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 220-1.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 222.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 217-23; For more on the debate over core curriculums see Lynne V. Cheney, *Fifty Hours: A Core Curriculum for College Students* (Washington, D.C.: National Endowment for the Humanities, 1989); Elizabeth A. Jones, "Is a Core Curriculum Best for Everybody?," in James L. Ratcliff, ed., *Assessment and Curriculum Reform* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1992); and Lisa R. Lattuca and Joan S. Stark, *Shaping the College Curriculum: Academic Plans in Action* (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1997).

<sup>26</sup> Suspitsin, "Core Curriculum," 134-35.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>28</sup> Vars, "Designs for General Education," 223.

<sup>29</sup> Suspitsin, "Core Curriculum," 134-5.

<sup>30</sup> Vars, "Designs for General Education," 225.

<sup>31</sup> For more on the core curriculum debate at Harvard see *The Great Core Curriculum Debate: Education as a Mirror of Culture* (New Rochelle, New York: Change Magazine Press, 1979), 79-102; Phyllis Keller, *Getting at the Core: Curricular Reform at Harvard College* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1982); "Report of the Committee on General Education," *Harvard College Curricular Review*, [http://www.fas.harvard.edu/curriculum-review/GENERAL\\_EDUCATIONR.pdf](http://www.fas.harvard.edu/curriculum-review/GENERAL_EDUCATIONR.pdf), November 2005, accessed May 2, 2006; Unlike Saint Joseph's College, it took Harvard 13 years to fully implement its core curriculum. Led by University President Derek Bok and Dean of Arts and Sciences Henry Rosovsky, Harvard eventually accomplished the "move away from content and toward methodology" ("Report of the Committee on General Education" 15). Following his mention of Harvard in "Designs for General Education," Vars' next sentence read: "On the other hand, the less well-known but exemplary core program at St. Joseph's College in Rensselaer, Indiana, is a living testimonial to the degree of genuine integration of curriculum that can be achieved by a dedicated faculty under wise leadership" (225).

<sup>32</sup> Charles J. Robbins, *Saint Joseph's College: A Chronology* (Rensselaer: Privately printed, 1983), 102-03, 109-10.

<sup>33</sup> Carlo Falconi, *The Popes of the Twentieth Century* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1967), 324.

<sup>34</sup> Timothy G. McCarthy, *The Catholic Tradition: Before and After Vatican II, 1878-1993* (Chicago: Loyola University Press, 1994), 65.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, 66.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, 65.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, 70.

<sup>38</sup> Peter Hebblethwaite, *The Runaway Church: Postconciliar Growth or Decline* (New York: Seabury Press, 1975), 13; For more on the Second Vatican Council see Hans Küng, *The Council, Reform, and Reunion* (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1962); Austin Flannery, ed., *Vatican Council II: Constitutions, Decrees, Declarations* (Northport, New York: Dominican Publications, 1996); and Xavier Rynne, *Vatican Council II* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1999).

<sup>39</sup> John P. Nichols, "Values and the Objectives of the Saint Joseph's College Core Curriculum," *Values Pedagogy in Higher Education* (1978), 4.

<sup>40</sup> Nichols, "Collaboration Essay," National Project IV (FIPSE) AGLS Presentation, 1, GCKKRL.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>42</sup> Nichols, "An Example of Integrative General Education, 1981," 2-3, GCKKRL; Nichols, "Designing a Core Curriculum: Proceedings of an Institute on Core Curriculum Design, 1979," 1, GCKKRL; Nichols, "The Core Curriculum at Saint Joseph's College, 1982," 2, GCKKRL; Robbins, *Saint Joseph's College*, 102-03, 109-10; "Core Curriculum Designed to Provide Interdepartmental Four-Year Program," *Stuff*, 13 February 1969; Zelda F. Gamson, ed., *Liberating Education* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1984), 133.

<sup>43</sup> Nichols, "An Example of Integrative General Education, 1981," 2, GCKKRL.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*; Nichols, "Values and the Objectives of the Saint Joseph's College Core Curriculum," *Values Pedagogy in Higher Education* (1978), 2; Nichols, "Values and the Objectives of the Saint Joseph's College Core



Curriculum” (Adrian, Michigan: Siena Heights College, April 2-5, 1978), 2, GCKKRL; “Curriculum Revision Committee Report, 1968” GCKKRL.

<sup>45</sup> Nichols, “An Example of Integrative General Education, 1981,” 1, GCKKRL.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, 8.

<sup>47</sup> Steve Schrader, “Curriculum Revision Committee Proposes Sweeping General Education Changes,” *Stuff*, 26 September 1968.

<sup>48</sup> Nichols, “An Example of Integrative General Education, 1981,” 2, GCKKRL.

<sup>49</sup> Vars, *Journal of Higher Education*: 219-22.

<sup>50</sup> Nichols, “An Example of Integrative General Education, 1981,” 2, GCKKRL; Nichols, “Values and the Objectives of the Saint Joseph’s College Core Curriculum,” *Values Pedagogy in Higher Education* (1978), 2; Nichols, “Values and the Objectives of the Saint Joseph’s College Core Curriculum” (Adrian, Michigan: Siena Heights College, April 2-5, 1978), 2, GCKKRL; “Curriculum Revision Committee Report, 1968,” GCKKRL.

<sup>51</sup> James Ahr, “SA to Investigate College ‘Academic Crisis,’” *Stuff*, 21 November 1968.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>53</sup> “Curriculum Revision,” *Stuff*, 3 October 1968.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>55</sup> James Lefler, “Personal Encounter in Class,” *Stuff*, 7 November 1968.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>59</sup> “Curriculum Revision,” *Stuff*, 3 October 1968.

<sup>60</sup> Schrader, *Stuff*, 26 September 1968.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>62</sup> “Administration OK’s ‘Time Out,’ Eight Panel Discussions Planned,” *Stuff*, 17 October 1968; “It’s About Time,” *Stuff*, 17 October 1968; “‘Time Out’ Panelists Named,” *Stuff*, 24 October 1968.

<sup>63</sup> The panel included Academic Dean Louis Gatto, Chairman of the English Department Carl Mills, Assistant Professor of Mathematics Philip Gilbert, Executive Vice President Paul White, Chairman of the Speech Department Ralph Cappuccilli, Director of Guidance Thomas Ryan, Chairman of the Art Department David Van Horn, and Associate Professor of English John Groppe. Formed in Madison, Wisconsin in 1947, the National Student Association (NSA) encouraged student activism and political protest. Its members opposed the actions of the House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC), participated in the direct action campaigns of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), and counseled Vietnam War draftees.

<sup>64</sup> Nichols, “The Core Curriculum at Saint Joseph’s College, 1982,” 3, GCKKRL.

<sup>65</sup> “Curriculum Revision Committee Report, 1968,” GCKKRL; Robbins, *Saint Joseph’s College*, 112; “Core Philosophy OK’d; Faculty Approves Survey,” *Stuff*, 21 November 1968.

<sup>66</sup> Nichols, “An Example of Integrative General Education, 1981,” 1, GCKKRL; Nichols, “Values and the Objectives of the Saint Joseph’s College Core Curriculum” (Adrian, Michigan: Siena Heights College, April 2-5, 1978), 2, GCKKRL.

<sup>67</sup> “Faculty Assembly Approves Mandatory Interterm, Search Policy, Core Courses,” *Stuff*, 20 March 1969.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>69</sup> Nichols, “Designing a Core Curriculum: Proceedings of an Institute on Core Curriculum Design, 1979,” 1-3, GCKKRL.

<sup>70</sup> John W. Ravage, to Louis Gatto and William Kramer, 7 February 1969, Transcript in the hand of Special Collections, Keith and Kate Robinson Library, Saint Joseph’s College, Rensselaer, Indiana.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*; Ravage was careful to note that the “asinine” comment “was [in] the attitude, not the actual wording.” Interestingly enough, the letter revealed that Ravage missed one of the central attractions of Core—namely that faculty worked with students in trying to understand the material. Faculty under Core were not meant to be experts.

<sup>74</sup> Mickey Healey, “Core Near Failure In One Semester,” *Stuff*, 19 February 1970.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*; Despite Healey’s initial opposition to Core, his opinion had clearly changed by 1973. In a *Stuff* article, the paper quoted Healey, now listed as “Michael S. Healey,” as saying the following: “Core has developed interaction among students and teachers that otherwise wouldn’t have existed. It is the most sober, sound, and effective method of teaching that students could care less about and wouldn’t listen to in another context...Of

course, Core is not ideal, [b]ut then neither are the students.” From “Core Requires Individual Commitment, Interaction,” *Stuff*, 2 February 1973.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*; Like other colleges and universities across the United States in the late 1960s, Saint Joseph’s College was a politically active campus. In the pages of *Stuff*, students protested the dismissal of a student teacher at Rensselaer Central High School for opposing the Vietnam War, Professor Donald Shea’s opinion editorial against public displays of affection, and the college’s administration for perceived substandard housing accommodations in the dormitories. The Black Student Union, perhaps the most politically involved group on campus, elected its own African-American homecoming queen and demanded an African-American presence on the Core Committee.

<sup>80</sup> Don Blake, “Core Attitudes Poor?,” *Stuff*, 4 December 1969.

<sup>81</sup> James Guzzaldo, “Junior Lauds Play, Not Core Class,” *Stuff*, 7 May 1970.

<sup>82</sup> “Core A...Core F,” *Stuff*, 7 October 1971.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>85</sup> Larry Weil, “Committee Report Reveals CORE Deficiencies,” *Stuff*, 24 February 1972.

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>92</sup> Nichols, “Collaboration Essay,” National Project IV (FIPSE) AGLS Presentation, 1-3, GCKKRL.

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>95</sup> Nichols, “Collaboration Essay,” National Project IV (FIPSE) AGLS Presentation, 1-3, GCKKRL; The documents do not reveal which department had no faculty in Core.

<sup>96</sup> Nichols, “Assessment of a Core Curriculum, FIPSE: National Project IV, 1980,” 6, GCKKRL.

<sup>97</sup> *Ibid.*, 7.

<sup>98</sup> *Ibid.*, 6.

<sup>99</sup> Nichols, “Collaboration Essay,” National Project IV (FIPSE) AGLS Presentation, 6, GCKKRL.

<sup>100</sup> Nichols, “Assessment of a Core Curriculum, FIPSE: National Project IV, 1980,” 3-7, GCKKRL; Nichols, “Collaboration Essay,” National Project IV (FIPSE) AGLS Presentation, 6-8, GCKKRL.

<sup>101</sup> Nichols, “Values and the Objectives of the Saint Joseph’s College Core Curriculum,” 8, GCKKRL.

<sup>102</sup> Sigrid Hutcheson, *Site Visit Report, St. Joseph’s College, February 14-15* (Ann Arbor: National Project IV, University of Michigan, 1980), GCKKRL.

<sup>103</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>104</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>105</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>106</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>107</sup> Nichols, “North Central Report on Core, 1980,” 25-26, GCKKRL; Robbins, *Saint Joseph’s College*, 133-34.

<sup>108</sup> Gordon F. Vars, *The Core Teacher* 29, no. 3 (1979): 3-6.

<sup>109</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>110</sup> Earl J. McGrath, *General Education and the Plight of Modern Man* (Indianapolis: The Lily Endowment, Inc., 1976), 151-62.

<sup>111</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>112</sup> The other colleges McGrath examined include Kenyon College, North Central College, Stanford University, the University of Kentucky, and the University of Wisconsin-Green Bay.

<sup>113</sup> Nichols, “North Central Report on Core, 1980,” GCKKRL.

<sup>114</sup> Clifton F. Conrad, to John Nichols, 2 March 1978, GCKKRL; While a graduate student at the University of Michigan, Conrad contributed to a national study of the undergraduate curriculum that was published by the Carnegie Commission on Higher Education. His book, *The Undergraduate Curriculum*, examined innovations in general education, the major, and experiential learning. Conrad served as president of the Association for the Study of Higher Education from 1987 to 1988 and a witness for the U.S. Government in higher education cases involving civil rights.

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<sup>115</sup> Barry O’Connell, “Where Does Harvard Lead Us?,” *Change* (Fall 1978): 35; *FORUM* (Fall 1977): 1-2; Carol H. Shulman, “Revamping Core Curricula,” *Research Currents* (Spring 1979): 7-8.

<sup>116</sup> Gamson, *Liberating Education*, 39.

<sup>117</sup> *Ibid.*, 38.

<sup>118</sup> Gamson noted that students were “informally interviewed” in the student center and the Laundromat—making it less likely that the college presented her with students who had known positive opinions of Core.

<sup>119</sup> *Ibid.*, 31.

<sup>120</sup> *Ibid.*, 93.

<sup>121</sup> *Ibid.*, 220.

<sup>122</sup> *Ibid.*, 132.

<sup>123</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>124</sup> Letter from Michael Mills, Robert Blackburn, and Jamie Beth Catlin, to Nichols, 28 November 1980, GCKKRL.

<sup>125</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>126</sup> Gamson, *Liberating Education*, 134.

<sup>127</sup> *Ibid.*; Letter from Michael Mills, Robert Blackburn, and Jamie Beth Catlin, to Nichols, 28 November 1980, GCKKRL; Nichols, “Assessment of a Core Curriculum, FIPSE: National Project IV, October 1980,” 5, GCKKRL.

<sup>128</sup> Nichols, “North Central Report on Core, 1980,” 30-34, GCKKRL.

<sup>129</sup> “Core Recognition,” <http://www.saintjoe.edu/academics/core/recognition.html>, last updated October 25, 1999, assessed January 4, 2006.

<sup>130</sup> “For Educators,” <http://www.saintjoe.edu/academics/core/educators.html>, assessed July 1, 2012; “Core Recognition,” <http://www.saintjoe.edu/academics/core/recognition.html>, assessed July 1, 2012; “General Education: Promising Models,” Association of American Colleges and Universities, <http://www.aacu.org/resources/generaleducation/promisingmodels.cfm>, assessed July 1, 2012

<sup>131</sup> “The Core Program,” <http://www.saintjoe.edu/academics/core/>, assessed June 22, 2012.