

## **RIVIER LAUNCHES NEW CORE ALIGNED WITH ESSENTIAL LEARNING OUTCOMES**

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**R**ivier University's new undergraduate core curriculum allows students to explore new ways of thinking as they answer four 'Big Questions'—Who am I and what is the world?, Who is my neighbor?, How shall we live?, and What, then, must we do?—questions central to the faith heritage, intellectual tradition and social teachings of the Roman Catholic Church.

Paul Cunningham, Ph.D., Dean of Arts and Sciences, is very proud of what Rivier faculty have accomplished as a result of their two years of collegial teamwork to create a truly original and contemporary core curriculum that was adopted by faculty vote at the Faculty Assembly in October 2012 and will be implemented beginning fall 2013. "It is a core that goes beyond a simple menu or collection of courses that students simply check off having taken in order to get on with the serious business of taking courses in their majors," said Cunningham.

The core curriculum consists of a common core focusing on these four 'Big Questions' and a core complement. In the core complement, students choose from courses in three areas: humanities and social sciences, mathematics and natural sciences, and languages. Opportunities for service learning, servant leadership, civic engagement, or community service are incorporated throughout the core to support the intellectual growth of students and enhance student leadership. In the first and second year, students will also participate in two service experiences. These experiences will introduce them to the service needs and opportunities available in the greater Nashua, N.H. area. In addition, every spring, the University will hold a Freshman Day of Service. There will also be international service opportunities available.

The University's new core is aligned with the Liberal Education and America's Promise (LEAP Goals) Initiative developed by the Association of American Colleges and Universities (AAC&U). "The new core is truly original in the way that it integrates AAC&U's essential learning outcomes in a thematic way throughout the four years of study with a focus on the 'Big Questions' that have historically been of interest in the Catholic Intellectual Tradition (CIT)," said Cunningham.

LEAP, launched in 2005, is a national initiative that champions the importance of a twenty-first century liberal education. This approach empowers students, preparing them to function in a complex work environment where diversity and change are the norm. Core courses will focus on skills needed and relevant to today's workplace.

Employers are demanding college educated employees who are engaged and informed citizens with higher levels of learning and knowledge and often different skills and abilities than the current workforce. According to LEAP, 91 percent of employers want employees to assume greater responsibilities and utilize an extensive range of skills; and 88 percent of employers want employees who are capable of completing more complex challenges and are more knowledgeable and educated. The LEAP Goals are outcomes-based in response to these demands of employers.

Implementation of LEAP'S essential learning outcomes provides Rivier graduates with strong intellectual and practical skills including communication, analytical and problem-solving skills, along with the ability to apply this knowledge and these skills in their workplace. Quantitative reasoning, technological literacy, and oral communication competencies will be infused throughout the core curriculum and in all major programs of study.

## RIVIER LAUNCHES NEW UNDERGRADUATE CORE CURRICULUM

Rivier University offers many high impact practices that research published by the AAC&U cites as substantial educational benefits, such as first-year seminars and experiences, writing-intensive courses, collaborative assignments and projects, community-based service learning, capstone courses and projects, and undergraduate research. In addition, Rivier's new global engagement initiatives will offer extensive opportunities for diversity and global learning experiences.

In addition to the four LEAP essential learning outcomes, Rivier has added a fifth outcome aligned to its mission and Catholic heritage—Foster a Sense of the Sacred and of the Dignity of the Human Person, particularly as expressed through the Catholic tradition, including:

- Recognition of Catholicism's contribution to the development of the whole person
- Appreciation of the sacred meaning and purpose of life
- Inquiry into the essence of authentic human community
- Respect for the belief systems of others.

“This newly revised core will prepare Rivier graduates to become engaged global citizens and highly skilled contributors to their communities and the world, as well as better prepared professionals,” said Vice President for Academic Affairs Sister Therese Larochelle, pm.

Rivier University is among the 1,250 accredited public and private colleges and universities that are members of the AAC&U and one of several prominent Catholic universities now integrating LEAP Goals into its core curriculum. ■

### Examples of New Courses:

#### **Stewards of the Living World**

Taught by biology faculty, this ‘Big Question’ first-year science course explores ecology, climate change, stewardship of natural resources, biodiversity and sustainability.

#### **Spanish for Health Care Professionals**

Three credits of a modern language will now be required of all nursing students and many will take this course. This is an example of a high impact practice where the course is geared to meet the professional needs of students.

#### **Student Success: Campus to Community**

This year-long course for first-year students focuses on academic achievement, cultural awareness, service and vocational discernment. Peer Mentors, who are educated in Servant Leadership, will attend class sessions and works with these first-year students.

### The Four ‘Big’ Questions:

1. Who Am I and What is the World? – First-year studies, Journey of Discovery: Support the intellectual growth of students while offering them opportunities for social, cultural, moral, and spiritual development.
2. Who Is My Neighbor? – Second and third year studies, Journey of Self in Relationship with Others: Cultivate critical thought, sound judgment, and respect for all people.
3. How Shall We Live? – Third and fourth year studies, Journey of Spirit: Challenge students to search for truth through the dialogue between faith and reason, to strive for academic excellence, and take responsibility for ourselves and for others.

4. What, Then, Must We Do? – Fourth-year studies, Journey of Servant Leadership: Invites students to put their ideals into practice as they engage in dialogue about basic human issues facing society, especially the plight of the poor and powerless in an environment in which integrated learning is the shared responsibility of all pursued in the curricular and co-curricular programs of the University.

**The LEAP Essential Learning Outcomes:**

Current best practices in demand by employers and integrated into Rivier’s new core curriculum:

1. Knowledge of Human Cultures and the Physical and Natural World Study in the sciences and mathematics, social sciences, humanities, histories, languages, and the arts.
2. Intellectual and Practical Skills
  - Inquiry and analysis
  - Critical and creative thinking
  - Written and oral communication
  - Quantitative Literacy
  - Information Literacy
  - Teamwork and problem solving
3. Personal and Social Responsibility
  - Civic knowledge and engagement – local and global
  - Intercultural knowledge and competence
  - Ethical reasoning and action
  - Foundations and skills for lifelong learning
4. Integrative and Applied Learning
  - Synthesis and advance accomplishment across general and specialized studies.