

THE SIGNATURE EXPERIENCE UPDATE SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

*We are Xavier Musketeers.
We are unique individuals who come together in the spirit of St. Ignatius,
to learn together, to serve together
and we will succeed in changing the world together.*

Committee Charge

During the Spring of 2017, Vice-President for Enrollment Management and Student Success, Aaron Meis, at the request of President Michael Graham, S.J., reconvened the Signature Experience Committee and tasked the committee with the following:

1. Revising the original Signature Experience report to bring it up-to-date on developments regarding advising, the Road Through Xavier, and the Diversity and Inclusion initiatives, among other items;
2. Adding recommendations from the group on how to best implement the sophomore year initiatives in the report;
3. Recommending an initial budget for the Signature Experience.
4. Completing these revisions and submitting an updated report to him by March 31.

In response to President Graham's request, the Signature Committee presents the following report, which includes (a) the following summary of recommendations, (b) a table of diversity and inclusion objectives, (c) a summary of the estimated budget, and (d) detailed updates on an Improved Advising Process and the Road Through Xavier, Structured Immersion Programs, Vocational Discernment Experiences and the Capstone/Legacy Project.

Committee Members

- Brian Balyeat, *Professor, Finance*
- Greg Carpinello, *Director, Dorothy Day Center for Faith and Justice; Director, Center for Faith and Justice*
- Molly Dugan, *Assistant Director of Student Involvement*
- Lisa Jutte, *Associate Professor, Athletic Training; Department of Sports Studies, Program Director, Exercise Science Program*
- Mack Mariani, *Associate Professor and Chair, Political Science*
- Lea Minniti, *Executive Director, Center for International Education*
- Richard Mullins, *Associate Professor, Chemistry*
- Sean Rhiney, *Director, Eigel Center*
- Douglas Ruschman, *Assistant Vice-President, Marketing & Communications*
- Taj Smith, *Director, Center for Diversity and Inclusion; Adjunct Faculty, Sociology*

SIGNATURE EXPERIENCE COMMITTEE SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

March 31, 2017

The Signature Committee respectfully submits the following updated summary of recommendations for consideration. These recommendations build on work that has already been completed to improve the advising system and develop the Road Through Xavier Advising Dashboard to facilitate intentional and ongoing conversations about student's goals and connect students to engaged and high-impact learning experiences.

First Year Programs

Existing first year programs - Manresa, First Year Seminar, and Goa - are central to the Xavier Experience and provide a strong foundation for community-building and student success.

The committee recommendations are as follows:

- Xavier University should continue working to strengthen, support, and build upon the foundation of existing first year programs;
- Xavier University should make it a priority to integrate First Year programs with other Signature Experiences so that First Year programs help prepare students to participate effectively in Signature Experiences. Likewise, Signature Experiences should be designed to help reinforce and extend the lessons that students learn in first year programs.

Immersion Programs

Structured immersion provides students with an applied, high impact learning opportunity that will inspire, prepare and connect students to deeper and ongoing service and learning opportunities. By engaging diverse experiences, exploring difference, and reflecting on one's place in the world, immersive experiences teach students to see the world with new eyes, develop critical skills for social analysis, find solidarity with those living on the margins, and cultivates a lasting commitment to social justice.

The committee believes that every Xavier student should participate in a structured immersion program during the course of their college career, ideally by the end of the second year of study. Giving all Xavier students an immersion experience can be achieved, in part, by leveraging participation in existing immersion programs (including Education Abroad, Alternative Breaks, Summer Service Internships and Dorothy Day Immersions, among others) serve 500-560 students annually. By expanding capacity in existing programs, creating additional short-term and long-term immersion experiences, and supporting the development of new engaged learning courses, the university could increase the number of students participating in immersions to 1,300 annually.

The committee offers the following recommendations:

- Every Xavier student should participate in a structured immersion program during the course of their college career.
- Immersion experiences should be integrated into the core curriculum.
- Participation in a structured immersion experience could take a number of forms, including through existing curricular and co-curricular immersions, education abroad experiences and engaged learning courses.
- To ensure the university has the capacity to provide all students with a structure immersion experience, the University should increase capacity in existing programs and create new immersion experiences that are accessible to all students regardless of financial circumstance.
- The University should commit itself to the creation of a number of additional short-term and long-term immersion experiences that provide students with opportunities to engage communities of difference and build deeper and mutually beneficial relationships between faculty, students and community members and community organizations.
- Funding should be set aside for scholarships and travel grants to expand opportunities for students with financial needs to participate in Education Abroad programs.
- Funding should be set aside for low-income students to defray costs of participation in local immersions and/or make up lost income for students who are dependent on part-time employment for their everyday living expenses.
- The number of engaged learning courses taught by Xavier faculty should be increased and departments that do not offer engaged learning courses should be encouraged to develop them and incorporate them into the curriculum, when appropriate.
- During the advising process and through the Road Through Xavier advising system, students should be strongly encouraged to participate in immersion programs by the end of their second year of study. The committee recognizes that some flexibility may be needed due to program requirements and a student's individual circumstances.

Our initial estimate is that the immersion programs would have program costs of approximately \$25,000 in year one and approximately \$130,000 when fully implemented. A full time professional staff member would also be needed to focus on implementation and provide administrative and programming assistance with the various immersion-related activities and programs. The cost of the professional staff member is estimated to be \$65,000, including benefits.

Vocational Discernment Retreats

As a Jesuit university, discernment is central to who we are. The committee recommends that the university create and design new vocational retreat experiences that encourage students at Xavier to reflect on their vocation and purpose during their sophomore or junior year. The committee recommends that the university provide support for the development and implementation of discernment retreats. Discernment experiences could vary in

duration and complexity, ranging from an evening of reflection to a more intensive overnight experience, or an excursion to a drive-able city to focus on a particular industry or network of alumni. Any department, program or office at the university could propose a retreat and the Center for Faith and Justice would help coordinate the retreats and assist with logistics and, in some cases, facilitation of the experiences. Given the goals of the retreats, incorporating the Alumni Office and Career Center into future discussions about discernment retreats will also be important.

The committee recommends the following:

- Create and design new vocational retreat experiences that encourage students at Xavier to reflect on their vocation and purpose during their sophomore or junior year.
- Build a culture of discernment by building capacity for vocational retreats over time and incorporating discernment and reflection throughout the student experience.
- To ensure a positive experience for all who participate, discernment retreats should be an optional, but strongly encouraged activity;
- Discernment retreats should be incorporated into the advising process and the Road Through Xavier advising system.

Our initial estimate is that the number of discernment retreats would build up from 7 in 2018-19 (serving 210 students) to 16 retreats in 2021-22 (serving 480 students). Total resources for this option, including programming costs, facilitator stipends, and staffing costs would begin at \$86,500 in 2018-19 and rise to \$169,000 in 2022-23.

The number of students served at retreats could be increased or decreased depending on the number of resources available, the level of faculty and staff participation, and the degree of student interest. Logistical and resource limitations would make it significantly more difficult to increase the number of students served (by making the retreat experience a required experience for all students, for example) without reducing the quality of the experiences.

Capstone and Legacy Projects

Capstones have the potential to be transformative high-impact learning experiences that help students achieve their academic and career goals. NSSE figures indicate that 60% of our majors participate in a culminating senior experience.

The committee recommends the following:

- Create an inventory of existing capstone experiences on campus and the various types of capstones offered by Xavier departments and programs;
- Collect data from students and departments to assess the impact that capstones and culminating experiences have on student success; and,

- Identify the different types of communities that students engage through their capstone and culminating experiences and examine the impact of senior capstones on underserved populations and communities of difference.

With additional information about capstones and their impact on student learning and the community, Xavier University can better explore a variety of options to expand and improve on capstone experiences.

Our initial budget estimate is \$2,000 for a member of the faculty and a student research assistant to collect and analyze data on existing capstone and culminating experiences.

Establishing Clear and Measureable Diversity and Inclusion Goals

In the Fall of 2016, a subgroup convened to review the Signature Experience from the standpoint of diversity and inclusion. In February of 2017 the group recommended diversity and inclusion outcomes for the immersion experiences and vocational retreats. A table listing diversity and inclusion outcomes for the Signature Experiences is attached.

The Committee believes that Signature Experiences can contribute to student learning about difference and enhance the respect that students have for others different from them, and provide students with a greater appreciation and understanding of the meaning and significance of diversity and inclusion. The committee believes that diversity and inclusion is central to Jesuit core values and the mission of the university.

Recommendations:

- The Signature Experience Committee recommends continued work to refine and improve upon the diversity and inclusion Student Learning Outcomes.
- The committee further recommends that the university devote the resources necessary to ensure that Signature Experiences, including Education Abroad and other long-term immersion programs, are accessible to students with financial needs.
- The committee recommends that the university prioritize opportunities that enable Xavier students to engage with disadvantaged communities, while being mindful to develop programs that provide clear and meaningful benefits to community organizations and those who live in the community, as well as ourselves.

Integrating the Xavier Experience into the Core Curriculum

Connecting Signature Experiences to the Core Curriculum would help send a clear message that engaged-learning experiences are valued by the University and central to student learning. Thoughtfully connecting Signature Experiences to the curriculum could also help ensure that the programs are designed in ways that support the Core Curriculum Learning Outcomes. Including Signature Experiences in the core also provides a method for tracking student participation and facilitating conversations about the experiences during academic advising.

Existing first year experiences demonstrate the varied ways that Signature Experiences could be incorporated into the core curriculum. The First Year Seminar is a required for-credit experience for all Xavier students. Goa is a required experience in the curriculum, but students receive zero academic credits for their participation. Manresa is a required co-curricular experience for all students before they start their first year, but is not formally incorporated into the curriculum at all.

Recommendations:

- The Signature Experience Committee believes that the goal of having all students participate in a structured immersion activity by the end of their second year cannot be accomplished without making it a required experience within the core curriculum. We recommend the creation of a new “Immersion” requirement (CORE 299 or immersion flag for existing courses) that students would meet by participating in a study abroad, service-learning course, community-engaged learning course, or other credit-bearing structured immersion program. Students could also meet the requirement by participating in one of a number of designated structured immersion programs and completing selected readings and a reflection assignment (this could be designed as a for-credit or not-for-credit option). While we recognize the challenges of expanding the curriculum requirements, we believe the structured immersions contribute to student learning and the achievement of key learning objectives directly relevant to diversity and inclusion.
- The Committee recommends that Vocational Discernment retreats not be a required part of the core curriculum, at least initially. We believe that discernment and reflection programs work best when students choose to participate. Participation in retreats and other forums for structured reflection can be increased over time by building a culture that supports and promotes opportunities for students to think about their place in the world.
- Capstones and other forms of culminating student experiences are already incorporated into the curriculum through many student majors and minors. The committee recommends gathering more information on capstone experiences at Xavier before adding a Capstone Flag or other requirement to the core curriculum.
- The committee believes that the Road Through Xavier advising dashboard will also provide a means, outside of the core curriculum, to both track and facilitate participation in Signature Experience programs and other high-impact learning activities. While the Road Through Xavier is key to expanding participation in high-impact learning activities, feedback from a student focus group suggests that students are likely to take the experiences more seriously and recognize their connection to student learning when the experiences are credit-bearing and required, rather than non-credit bearing and optional.

The Committee also notes that any proposal to modify the Core Curriculum must be submitted and approved by first the Core Curriculum Committee and then by the Board of Undergraduate Studies. After both Academic committees approve a proposed change to the

Core Curriculum, the entire Faculty votes on the proposed change to the Core Curriculum. Proposal changes may require including new requirements (Immersion, Vocation, Capstone), the addition of new courses, ex: CORE 299 Immersive Learning to capture new Signature Experiences, and Flag designating a course as meeting a Signature Experience requirement. Once a change has been approved by the faculty, it will be in place for the next academic catalog year. Given the steps necessary to implement a change to the core curriculum, the earliest a new requirement could be in place is Fall 2018 (for the class of 2022).

Building the Right Infrastructure to Support the Signature Experience

In addition to two additional professional staff members focused, respectively, on immersions and retreats, the committee recommends that the university take care that the proper structure is in place to ensure that the Signature Experiences work together effectively to help students achieve their academic and professional goals. Accordingly, the committee recommends that the Signature Experience be directed by an Associate Dean or Dean who reports to the University Provost.

The Committee considered a faculty director of the Signature Experience as an alternative model, but remains concerned that the position requires more stable leadership to build and take advantage of institutional knowledge gained during the course of developing the Signature Experience programs. Moreover, the committee believes that a full-time position at the level of a Dean or Associate Dean is needed to provide the leadership necessary to coordinate the experience across multiple centers across the university, promote and develop capacity across colleges and departments, integrate Signature Experiences into the core curriculum and supervise assessment of the various Signature Experiences. Without the proper leadership or structure, the Committee believes that the Signature Experiences have the potential to become silos disconnected from one another.

While we have included funding in the budget for the full-time salary at an Associate Dean's level, it is possible that some of the additional costs indicated here may not materialize in year one (or subsequent years) if an internal candidate is selected, depending on whether and how quickly a replacement is made.

What's in a Name?

The Signature Experience Committee acknowledges that the name of our committee may create a certain lack of clarity into what exactly the Signature Experience is about. The Committee recommends that students, faculty and staff continue to be consulted to identify an alternative name that is better received or more informative, particularly from the perspective of students and prospective students and parents.