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Xavier University Institutes Changes to the Core Curriculum; Adds 10 New Programs

New Orleans LA – A new expansion of Xavier University of Louisiana’s academic programs are being introduced in the 2018 academic year, as administrators and teachers evolve the fundamental curriculum to meet the changing needs of educating each new generation.

Since its founding, [Xavier University of Louisiana](http://www.xavier.edu) has prided itself on its commitment to the liberal arts, requiring all of its students, regardless of major, to take a prescribed set of courses that were deemed fundamental to a Catholic liberal arts education. Current students and thousands of alumni will recognize this as the Core Curriculum.

The Core in its current form, as rolled out in 1980, was designed to ensure that students in majors as diverse as business and history, or music and the sciences, would all have the same basic preparation. The expectation was that students, exposed to a wide variety of disciplines, would develop a wide range of intellectual capacities that would enable them to flourish throughout their lives – and to make a difference in the lives of others.

And while the number of required hours expanded from 56 to 60 and a few of the specific courses themselves were added or dropped since that most recent tweaking of the core, for the past 37+ plus years all Xavier students needed to meet those basic requirements to graduate.

To elevate the academic experience of our future students, this fall semester will see the implementation of a new Core, the end result of years of study and planning by a dedicated faculty committee. This year’s new freshman class, e.g. the Class of 2022, will be the first students to follow the new standards, although upperclassmen will have the option to adopt them or remain under the Core their class came in with.

Although the most significant feature of the new Core is that it reduces the mandated workload from 60 to 40 hours, the impact of the changes go far beyond the mandatory basic course requirements. It fundamentally changes the essence of what the Core is supposed to do by modifying the types of courses that qualify as core requirements, increasing the flexibility for students to choose between different requirements, and introducing several new courses to satisfy certain criteria.

The streamlined core will also give students greater opportunity and ownership of their education and open up the possibility to pursue majors, minors, concentrations, certificates, or classes both within and outside of their chosen degree path that are interesting and innovative.

Fundamentally the new Core embodies a series of “learning outcomes” which were approved by the University Academic Assembly more than two years ago. These desired outcomes were to ensure that all Xavier graduates would be able to communicate effectively through writing and speaking, be able to use quantitative, empirical, and critical reasoning skills to solve problems, be able to incorporate diverse cultural perspectives in their analysis of uses and to recognize the interconnectivity of human experience, be able to demonstrate a science-based understanding of the natural world, be able to interpret and evaluate diverse forms of human expression, and be able to apply socially responsible and ethical principles to promote equity and sustainability in ways that align with Xavier’s mission.

Dr. Richard Peters, an associate professor in the Division of Business and the Faculty Director of the Core Curriculum said the new curriculum, which has been designed to reach those goals, was crafted to be a unique blend of the University past with its present and future. It will integrate the rich legacy and tradition of Xavier’s identity as a historically Black and Catholic institution with its status a premier institution for contemporary liberal arts education.

He said the courses within the new 40 credit hour curriculum will challenge students to think critically and innovatively about their world, regions, communities, and themselves. Ideally, they will evolve and progress from the early foundational courses that will stress development of skills related to written/verbal communication, quantitative reasoning, and critical thinking, on to exploratory courses that will individually and collectively promote disciplinary and interdisciplinary inquiry. The final stage of the Core is intellectual development that will empower students to engage holistically with complex issues on a global and societal stage.

Specifically, the core has three tiers, each building upon the other. Each tier consists of some existing courses, some existing courses modified to incorporate the Core tenets, and some new courses specifically designed to meet Core objectives.

The first of these, Foundations at Xavier (13 hours), introduces students to college-level written and spoken rhetoric, quantitative reasoning, and critical thinking and writing skills necessary for success in school and in life through selective courses in English, Math, and specifically-designed courses in the college experience and XCOR-level courses.

The second tier, Explorations in the Liberal Arts (21 hours), delves into such diverse subjects as African American Heritage & Legacies, Faith and Society, Scientific Reasoning, The Human Past, Human Behavior, and Examined Life and Creative Expression and Engagement.

The final segment, Engagements: (6 hours), focuses on engaging the Xavier mission and other important global issues.

Most significantly, all aspects of the new Core Curriculum are guided intimately by the University mission such that students are developed to be life-long learners and global leaders who actively contribute to a more just and humane society for all.

The new Core Curriculum is not the only area where changes have occurred, as Xavier has made a conscious effort to expand the University’s academic offerings. In just the past year the College of Arts and Sciences has added five new undergraduate programs, one additional master’s program, three minors, and a specialized certificate program.

Those new undergraduate degree programs include the Bachelor of Science (B.S.) in Bioinformatics, the B.S. in Data Science, the B.S. in Neuroscience, the Bachelor of Arts (B.A.) in Sociology with a

concentration in Crime and Social Justice, and the B.A. in Music degree with a concentration in Jazz Studies, while those seeking an advanced degree need look no further than the new Master of Public Health (M.P.H) in Health Equity.

Here's a complete look at what's new:

UNDERGRADUATE DEGREE PROGRAMS

Bioinformatics

The Bioinformatics program is designed to provide students with the knowledge and skills relevant to the broad field of Bioinformatics, including understanding complex biological systems and their quantitative data; processing, storing, analyzing, and modeling of many types of biological data; and effectively communicating research findings.

The major will provide students with the scientific foundation for learning, discovery, engagement, and innovation. These opportunities will support a well-rounded understanding of the principles and theories of the computing and biological sciences so that students are willing and able to have leadership roles in their careers or as they enter graduate school.

The program's interdisciplinary curriculum will provide students with content knowledge across the field. Graduates of the program will acquire the qualifications needed to pursue careers in industry, government, and academia as bioinformatics professionals, or pursue further studies towards obtaining advanced degrees or other STEM related degrees.

Data Science

The Data Science program will allow students to gain understanding and skills relevant to the broad field of Data Science, including information technology principles, concepts, practices, system and database software, learning from data, and analytical thinking.

Drawing most heavily on the offerings of the Division of Mathematical and Physical Sciences, the program's interdisciplinary curriculum will provide students with content knowledge across the field, allowing them to acquire the qualifications to work as scientists, and the knowledge and understanding to pursue further graduate training in data science or other scientific fields.

Data Science graduates will be expected to demonstrate knowledge of computer science, mathematics, statistics, and data science.

Neuroscience

Research and technological developments are fueling rapid growth in the interdisciplinary field of Neuroscience, which is a study of the brain and the nervous system. Students in Xavier's program, which is the first of its kind to be offered at an HBCU, will gain understanding and skills relevant to the broad field of neuroscience, including current issues, trends, and questions.

Students pursuing a degree in Neuroscience will augment a suite of Psychology courses with a flexible menu of coursework from Biology, Chemistry, Mathematics, and Computer Science. Graduates of the program will be qualified to work as scientists, to pursue further graduate training in Neuroscience or

other scientific fields, or to enter training programs for health professionals.

The new program's flexibility and interdisciplinary curriculum allow students interested in medical school to complete a pre-med curriculum in addition to the Neuroscience major. Alternatively, students may opt for a new minor in Cognitive Neuroscience.

Sociology with Concentration in Crime and Social Justice

Students interested in sociology can choose to focus their study on the subfield of criminology and the criminal justice system. The new interdisciplinary concentration will use the lens of social justice to expand the study of criminology to encompass inequalities in the criminal justice system, the relationships among behavior, punishment, and public perceptions, and how social identities such as race, class, gender, disability and sexuality affect how individuals experience crime or the criminal justice system.

Unlike programs focused on vocational skills, Xavier's new program will allow students to use sociological tools to develop critical, social scientific perspectives to consider how our definitions of crime, our awareness of its causes, and our reactions to crime are rooted in larger economic, political, and social contexts.

Jazz Studies

The Bachelor of Arts in Music with a Concentration in Jazz Studies is designed for students who have an interest in the performance, theoretical, and historical aspects involved with the study of Jazz. The concentration is based on theoretical concepts, aural applications, and historical information used in Traditional New Orleans Jazz, Swing, Bebop, Fusion and 21st Century Jazz forms and compositions.

The concentration will prepare students for performance, composition, and pedagogical application in the Jazz idiom. They will be introduced to devices used in early, main-stream and contemporary Jazz Improvisation, along with composition and arranging for the small chamber group to large Jazz ensembles.

GRADUATE PROGRAMS

Health Equity

The M.P.H. in Health Equity program will expose students to the five core areas of public health (biostatistics, epidemiology, social and behavioral sciences, health services administration, and environmental health sciences) along with a focus on the integration of determinants of health equity and healthy behaviors.

Students completing the graduate program in health equity at Xavier will be exposed to a broad range of skill-building experiences such as critical thinking, project management, and analytical reasoning to address a plethora of complex health issues and stressors through classroom dialogues, in applied research settings, and in-field practice experiences. The ultimate outcome of this program in health equity is to produce competent and highly-competitive graduates capable of entering the workforce or pursuing advanced training in public health, health policy, and medicine. The program offers both a thesis and a non-thesis option.

MINORS

Afro Latin American and Caribbean Studies

The Afro Latin American and Caribbean Studies minor is designed to enhance student awareness and understanding of the African influence in Latin America and the Caribbean region, and by extension, in Louisiana, as well as to increase development of cognizance and cultural sensitivity toward the international communities of color in the Americas. It will be an asset to students considering careers in international affairs, education, research, and the Foreign Service.

Bioethics

The Bioethics minor will give students the opportunity to study the ethical dimensions inherent in medical and scientific research, the delivery and practice of health care, and the creation of national and global health policy. This interdisciplinary program includes a wide variety of perspectives: topics in biology and public health, social and cultural issues, and dilemmas in philosophical and theological ethics. The study of Bioethics will challenge students to continually reflect on the meaning of a just and humane society.

Neuroscience (see above)

CERTIFICATE PROGRAMS

Spanish for Healthcare Professionals

The Spanish for Health Professionals Certificate Program is a language intensive 15 credit hour series of five courses will provide students with the language skills, experience, and cultural competence needed to aid those in the health care professions in successfully communicating with the Spanish speaking population in the United States. The program will offer two tracks: an international track in Costa Rica in which students gain international clinical experience and a local track in in New Orleans.

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About Xavier University of Louisiana

Xavier was recently ranked as the nation's #2 HBCU (Historically Black College and University) by [College Consensus](#), a unique college ratings website that aggregates publisher rankings and student reviews, in its newly released publication, *Best HBCUs for 2018*. Xavier was also among the four colleges selected by Beyonce and her *BeyGood Foundation* as the recipient of a Homecoming Scholars Scholarship Award announced after her much lauded performance at Coachella.

That's just the latest in national accolades Xavier has received as one of the best universities in the country. Most notably, XULA is ranked as the best value among southern regional colleges and universities in the 2018 edition of "Best Colleges" by the *U.S. News Media Group*. Xavier also ranked No.1 in its grouping, heading the list of only 15 schools that qualified for the Southern Region category listed under "Great Schools, Great Prices."

At Xavier *eXcellence awaits yoU*. For more information about Xavier University of Louisiana visit us online at www.xula.edu or follow us on Facebook, YouTube, or Twitter @XULA1925. Take a moment to learn more about how Xavier is preparing students for the future at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sD4mb-jYZC8>. To book interviews about our recent accomplishments and/or to speak with our experts in the

field of pharmacy, education, premed, public health, science, technology, math, business, English, communications and the arts, contact Diana Hernandez at (504) 520-5120 or dhernan1@xula.edu.