Core pilot framework

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The current IL Tech core was reviewed for revision by a committee convened out of the Provost office in 2023. This resulted in a number of suggestions, and after review, the Provost office is proposing piloting two core changes, as well as one policy change, related to the core. This is being moved forward under the process described in Handbook Appendix P for consideration by UGSC and UFC

Background

The principles informing this piloting are:

- Changes to the core should follow, and be informed by, the strategic planning process, which is only now getting underway to update our 2020-25 strategic plan. Our core should reflect the mission and strategy that will be the outcome of that process, which is yet to be determined. It is important to have strategy drive operations, not the other way around.
- Changes should be made in a data-driven fashion, prioritizing student success. As such, we propose piloting any changes to gather such data, before implementing changes.
- We are currently preparing for our 10-year accreditation cycle, and it is risky and disruptive to change the core during that process. This is especially so when we have recently been under scrutiny for core assessment. The recent review of that scrutiny was very positive, but also highlighted the need to make improvements on the basis of assessment data. Gathering such data in a pilot is aligned with accreditor concerns and specific deficits identified at IL Tech.

To accomplish this, we are proposing a process by which potential changes are piloted to determine their effectiveness, desirability, and feasibility, before making a final decision. These pilots will provide actual data about possible changes and also help inform the strategic planning process. To be an effective pilot, we will:

- Clearly describe the core changes and policy changes
- Implement the pilot over a defined and finite time frame: one year, consisting of S26 and F27. This will get us through the HLC and ABET reaccreditation processes and allow two semesters of data to be accumulated. A decision is anticipated in S27, in time for F27

- Students taking such pilot classes will be able to count them toward their core requirements for graduation, in an accommodation framework within the existing core. This is done in an alignment process, matching revised core LOs of newly proposed courses with existing core component LOs. This is described in more detail in each element below.
- A clear assessment and pilot decision criteria are described, which include:
    - how effective these courses are (LO assessment data)
    - how desirable they are based on 3 criteria
        - student satisfaction
        - faculty satisfaction
        - financial feasibility.

The specific changes proposed include

1. A policy change allowing double counting of courses toward both core and program requirements, designed to streamline student degree progression and student success
2. A focused communication intensive core component designed to increase communications skill of our graduates
3. A design thinking component designed to increase the ability of our students to innovate effective solutions to important problems

It is anticipated that after the strategic planning process and this pilot process, additional revisions to the core may also be piloted or implemented.

Policy Change

It is currently impermissible for students to count core classes toward the core and toward major requirements, with a specific exception carved out for only specific programs at the discretion of UGCS https://ugsc.iit.edu/11-10-2015minutes.html. That exemption has proven successful in that context and is well received by students. As such, the proposal is to expand this to a general policy for all programs and core components:

> *Any class passed can count toward both core requirements and major requirements. Each will be evaluated independently. Transcripts will be evaluated to determine if they have satisfied the core. Transcripts will be evaluated to determine if they have satisfied major requirements of any degree. All transcripted classes will be considered in both processes, and any given class can be applied to each area.*

This will allow students to more rapidly progress, improving retention and graduation rate.

Specific Core Component Pilots

There are two specific pilots proposed:

1. A two-class COM sequence designed to more effectively deliver communications skills
2. A design class to more effectively teach students how to apply creativity to navigate open-ended problem solving through design processes and methods.

1. Communications Sequence Pilot

Curricular change to be piloted: two communications focused classes, COM100, COM200, 3ch each.

These classes are developed in response to the committee's analysis that the current core C component is overly complex, with too many C classes that are not sufficiently focused on core communication and writing pedagogy to be effective. The piloted classes, on the other hand, will be intentionally designed to provide focused, intensive pedagogy aligned with modern communication education. Classes are designed within HASS under the direction of the Director of Communication across the Curriculum.

Core accommodation framework:

- **Revised pilot LOs:**
    - COM100 – Designing Your Life

      Students will be able to…
        a. Understand, take notes on, and summarize writing from a variety of public, technical, and academic genres
        b. Identify the argument structure of a text and analyze the strengths and weaknesses of the argument for different purposes
        c. Locate and evaluate the reliability of sources for different rhetorical purposes
        d. Synthesize information on a topic for use in their own arguments
        e. Effectively construct texts in fundamental academic and professional genres
    - COM200 – AI, Data, and Communications

      Students will be able to…
        a. Critically read and analyze scientific, technical, and data communications from a variety of sources

b. Demonstrate an understanding of the rhetorical and ethical challenges involved in communicating data and science academically, professionally, and publicly
c. Communicate scientific and technical information effectively in academic, professional, and public contexts
d. Use computationally-assisted writing technologies as an effective part of their writing processes

- **Core accommodation:** Students taking these classes will be deemed to have completed
    - The swing H/S class
    - HUM200

2. Design Pilot

Curricular change to be piloted: A design and creativity class, 3ch, that is a response to the committee charge to consider adding design thinking to the core, and also aligned with the innovation mission of Il Tech. In the initial offering, in S26, Jeremy Alexis, the course designer, will offer it. In F26, the intention is to offer versions of this course with different instructors to assess transferability and scalability that would be necessary for a core component. The vision is that different instances of courses meeting the described LO above will be possible, applying creativity and design to a diverse set of problems and disciplines.

In the initial instance this will be designated IPRO397, to reflect the core accommodation, but the vision is that these classes might, if successfully adopted, carry a different designation, such as ID or DES. However, in the pilot phase, it is important to communicate to students the accommodation, which is achieved with this designation.

Core accommodation framework:

- **Revised pilot LOs:**
    - Students will be able to apply creativity to navigate open-ended problem solving through design processes and methods.

    Core accommodation: This LO is aligned with the current IPRO core Open-ended problem-solving core LO "*Students will demonstrate the ability to contribute to solutions to open-ended problems of community and societal relevance that require an interdisciplinary approach*" but will provide a more robust pedagogy in the areas of creativity and design thinking. As such, students taking these classes will be deemed to have completed one IPRO.

Piloting process

Staging:

- Pilot framework allowing for pilot exception to core to be UGSC approved F25
- Course offered to limited student cohorts in S26, F27
- Assessment conducted as part of a focused core assessment by the CCAC in collaboration with faculty as described:
    - Primary LO assessment
        a. For WRT 100/200 in collaboration with HASS faculty and CxC director. Assess these students and control group taking regular sequence Hum200 + C designated H/S class against piloted LOs
        b. For IPRO397 pilot in collaboration with JA / IPRO. Align these pilot LOs and assess control IPRO group
    - Impact analysis
        a. Follow students and assess against H LOs to gauge what loss of HUM200 does to achievement of H LOs in future H classes
        b. Follow students into 2nd IPRO to see if a deficit is observed. In prior core assessment significant deficit was seen in LO achievement between 1st IPRO vs 2nd ; will this course be as effective first experience and prepare them to do as well as typical 2nd IPRO students, or will they be more like first timers?
- Report to UGSC F26 (interim), S27 final
- Decision after reporting to UGSC and Provost office in S27. **Decision criteria:**

Criteria	Responsible party
Do students satisfactorily achieve LOs?	CCAC with collaboration as described
Resources and financial analysis ($ and teaching loads)	Provost Office
Are faculty satisfied with these classes?	UGSC
Are students satisfied with these classes (focused course evals)?	Academic affairs