**The Douglas College CORE (Comprehensive Original Research Engagement) Stream**

**Draft Proposal, Oct. 9, 2015**

**DNW**

**Brief:**

The central aim of the Douglas College CORE stream initiative is to provide students with a venue for sustained high-level engagement on a research project, question, or approach within current curriculum structures. Exploring ideas fundamental to critical thinking, research practice, and social issues across disciplines and pedagogical venues, CORE integrates current curriculum structures into a focused thematic concern (i.e.: social inclusion, digital cultures, urban ecology). As a result, CORE courses allow students to complete all UT required and degree-required elective credits while emphasizing extended skills in critical thinking, writing, reading, and problem solving across disciplines. The desire is to create cross-disciplinary collaborations and conversations around a central research theme and question, creating a curriculum that, while fulfilling the required learning objectives, also engages students in research that contributes to overarching cultural, technical, and skills-based applications.

The resulting CORE stream student, while foundationally prepared, also possesses high-level skills generating research questions, designing and executing research projects, sustaining research engagement, along with a broad understanding of research practices and approaches in a variety of disciplines.

Led by a team of faculty members engaged in a central research concern, CORE works to achieve deliverables within one foundational academic year. Each year, CORE resets, undertaking another research-based approach or iteration of an earlier question. Existing courses within the foundation year are tagged as CORE courses and students within those courses participate in the objective.

**Strategic Plan Deliverables:**

* Encourage transfer to tier-one universities where research experience, particularly with research outputs, is commiserate with student success
* Encourage the acquisition of student skills across a wide variety of foundational disciplines, better equipping them for employment
* Encourage faculty-led research questions with ongoing outcomes and deliverables
* Possibility for direct engagement with external research partnerships in a problem-solving role
* Students continuing on at the College will be better prepared to continue supporting research projects as student research assistants or Co-op placements.

**Longer Explanation:**

The applied approach of CORE teaches students how to conduct their coursework within an environment that encourages the use of digital technologies and tools. Rather than simply use technological frameworks as another delivery mode for traditional content, CORE aims to understand how the technology creates knowledge. In so doing, CORE builds digital tools into the structures of dissemination and pedagogy, providing the opportunity to apply, in a discipline-based setting, the strategies created by web-based modes of dissemination and collaboration such as blogs, wikis, podcasts, data visualizations, and online social networks. By equipping students with the skills and intellectual power to compete in a world where these strategies will dominate, CORE fills the current deficit in teaching students how to work with the available technology to better explore and analyze questions and results. In part, CORE will investigate the way these technologies transform the thematic landscape by submitting disciplinary topics to all the analytical and creative possibilities the new media milieu offers.

The CORE stream will better prepare students for future learning because it provides a foundation that exposes students to discourse networks in play across the disciplines early in post-secondary studies. While incorporating the interpretive strategies emerging out of the current research discourses, CORE also introduces traditional themes around which discussions revolve. Each cohort will deal with a topic--or rubric--governing and stipulating an object of study that unifies the pedagogical approaches and critical tools. Using a primarily problem-based and case-based research approach, team members participate in conversations about the different disciplinary approaches to the over-arching topic. The conversations on these subjects in a team setting will break down traditional pedagogical paradigms in favour of a collaborative environment that encourages the active application of inter- and cross-disciplinary methodologies for research outcomes. Faculty bring their specialized knowledge to contest definitions and concepts, while students participate fully in the evolution of those definitions and concepts in face-to-face discussions and online teams.

At its root, the CORE stream gives students a solid and unique foundation in the basic skills of critical thinking, reading, writing, and problem solving. At the same time, CORE models a collaborative environment that reflects the need to be adaptable in new academic and professional climates. The CORE stream’s emphasis on digital tools and emerging technologies equips students with a real-world application for research-based learning. With an emphasis on collegial collaboration, team building--and substantive conversations about complex ideas—The CORE stream occupies an otherwise unoccupied niche in the College’s curriculum.