

News From the Core

April 2026

Core Happenings: Incoming Team of Associate Directors



When the University ratified SLU's new common Core curriculum in the Spring 2020 semester, the UCC appointed the Core's first team of Associate

Directors. Over the past six years and in collaboration with the Director of the Core and the UUCC, this inaugural team has carefully and successfully led the vision for and development of their unique Core areas. Associate Directors serve three-year terms that are renewable once, after which they are free to reapply for one additional term.

This May, the first cohort of students to have completed the Core from start to finish graduates. At the same time, several members of our original leadership team are completing their terms, leaving five positions eligible for open applications from the University community. For these five open positions, the Core was grateful to have received over 25 applications from engaged and extremely qualified faculty and staff members.

From January to March 2026, all standing members of the UUCC developed and participated in a deliberative, collaborative interview process designed to identify the candidates best positioned to lead the Core forward beyond implementation and into sustainability. The UUCC strongly recommended, and the Director of the Core duly appointed, the five Associate Directors below. They will join Hamish Binns, Associate Director of the Core at SLU-Madrid, for the 2026-29 term. This new team represents both new vision and continuity to carry the Core forward.

Associate Director for Open Seminars, Dr. Carolyn O'Laughlin

Carolyn O'Laughlin is an Assistant Professor of Higher Education Administration in the School of Education. Her teaching and scholarship focus on neurodivergence, belonging, and inclusive practices in higher education. Before joining the faculty, she spent over 20 years in student affairs, an experience that continues to shape how she approaches teaching, mentoring, and systems change. Carolyn is excited to work with faculty on the Core's Open Seminars (Ignite and Collaborative Inquiry), which she sees as distinctive bookends to the undergraduate experience at SLU. These courses are not about mastering content as much as they are about learning how to learn: beginning with curiosity, engaging ideas through experience and reflection, and working across difference to make meaning together. In a moment when higher education can feel rushed and transactional, Dr. O'Laughlin believes that SLU's Open Seminars offer an invitation to slow down, to see one another, ask better questions, and lean into the complexity that makes us human.





Associate Director for Cura Personalis and Reflection in Action

Dr. Bobby Wassel is excited to return for his third term as the AD for Cura Personalis and Reflection in Action. Dr. Wassel identifies his work with the University Core as one of the highlights of his 20+ years in higher education. Having spent all of these

years working with undergraduates, he knows firsthand the impact that care for self and others, as well as learning beyond the classroom, can have on the development of college students. He is excited to continue expanding co-curricular experiences for Cura Personalis 2 and Reflection in Action, as well as exploring new ways to help prepare instructors as they design and facilitate courses and programs in these areas.

Associate Director for Theological & Philosophical Foundations

Professor Brower-Toland has been involved in the design, development, review, and assessment of Ultimate Questions courses since the inception of the new university core curriculum. She brings to this role a conviction that questions about meaning, value, and the human condition lie at the heart not only of the Catholic Jesuit intellectual tradition but also of undergraduate education as such.



She is committed to ensuring that Ultimate Questions courses continue to provide an opportunity for every SLU undergraduate to better understand their own beliefs and values in dialogue with the Catholic Jesuit tradition and to discover how philosophical and theological questions--and their own answers to them--shape their lives outside the classroom.



Associate Director for Eloquencia Perfecta

Since joining SLU in 2022, Hillary Ash has served as an Assistant Professor of Communication, specializing in speaking and visual rhetoric. She has been deeply engaged with the Core through her work developing four Core courses, serving on the Ways of Thinking subcommittee, and piloting the Communication Skills Lab, which supports students' oral and visual communication skills. As an Associate Director, she looks forward to partnering with the Reinert Center

to support St. Louis and Madrid faculty and lead workshops on emerging challenges in Eloquencia Perfecta, such as the impact of AI on students' ability to express themselves in various media.

Associate Director for Equity and Global Identities

Ali Fisunoglu is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Political Science. He has previously served as the Social Science representative on the University Undergraduate Core Committee (UUCC) and as a member of the Equity and Global Identities (EGI)



subcommittee. His research draws on quantitative insights to explore state capacity, political economy, and political demography, particularly in post-conflict settings. Ali was attracted to this role because he enjoys finding the common threads that connect different academic fields. He looks forward to collaborating with faculty across the humanities, sciences, and professional schools to serve as a supportive resource as they integrate EGI attributes into their own unique curricula.



Associate Director for SLU-Madrid

Hamish Binns is starting his second term as Associate Director of the UCC at the Madrid Campus. He began teaching at SLU-Madrid almost 30 years ago and became full-time in 2011. In addition to his work guiding the University Core on the Madrid campus, he serves as program director for ESL, Modern

Languages, and Education and is also engaged in post-graduate research in Education at the University of Edinburgh. His love of holistic education and passion for task-based, student-focused learning is what initially drew him to the Core, and he hopes to continue working with the inspirational students from the Core Assessment Portfolio Pilot and collaborating with and learning from his colleagues on both sides of the Atlantic.

Ignite Ambassadors



For a second year, the Core partnered with the Office of Admission to offer the Ignite Ambassadors program. This program invites Ignite instructors who have been nominated by their students for the Ignite Instructor of the Year Award to be some of the first faculty to meet and engage the imaginations of prospective students. Through a 50-minute, carefully-crafted version of a single Ignite class session, Ignite Ambassadors introduce prospective students to a key component of SLU's intentionally-designed Undergraduate Core curriculum.

This spring, Ignite Ambassadors delivered over 40 Ignite class sessions to more than 550 prospective students, with preliminary feedback indicating a positive impact on future Billikens. As another successful season concludes, the Core would like to thank the Ignite Ambassadors for showcasing SLU's signature first-year experience and the Office of Admission for this partnership. We look forward to continued collaboration next year and beyond.

First Graduating Class on New Core

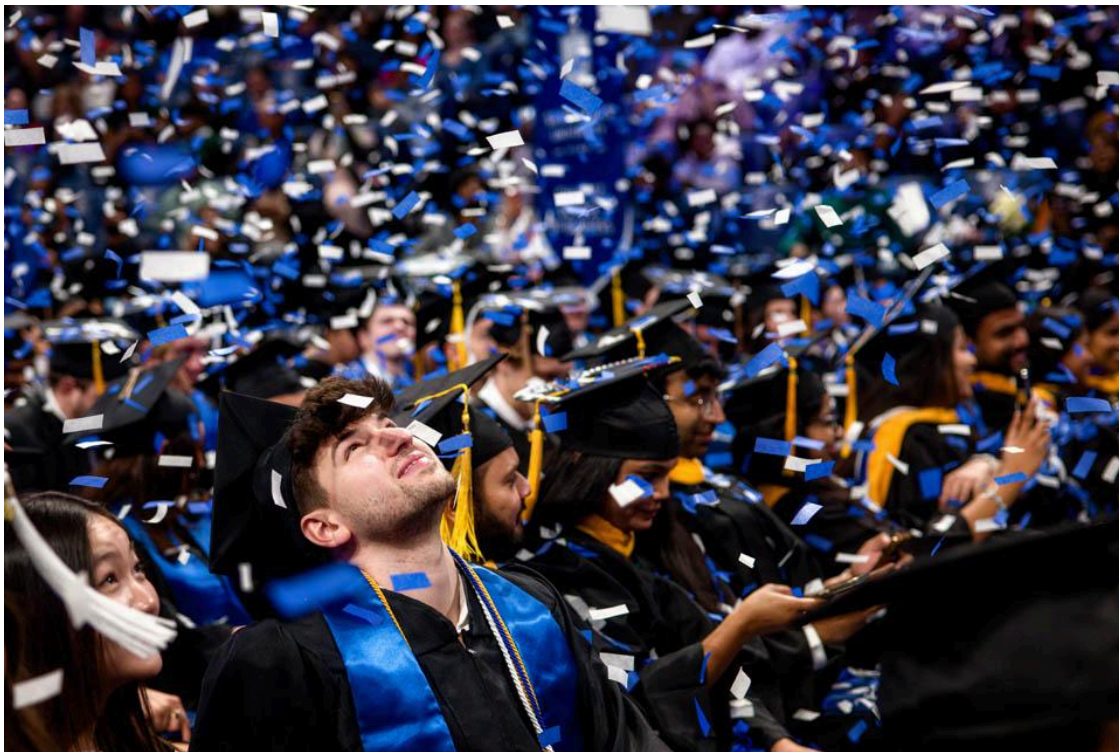


Photo by Sarah Conroy

The University Undergraduate Core officially launched with the incoming freshman class of Fall 2022. This spring, SLU will graduate its first class on the new University Undergraduate Core. From its inception, the University Core has invited all SLU undergraduates to become creative, courageous learners and leaders in the Catholic, Jesuit tradition. With nearly 1,000 Core courses offered by all colleges, schools, majors, and programs across SLU's three campuses, SLU's undergraduate Core is truly a shared endeavor that provides a common intellectual experience rooted in the Catholic, Jesuit tradition for all undergraduate students. The Core is pleased to celebrate these past four years of commitment and dedication from the campus community, and we look forward to many years to come.

Interested in learning more about the origins of SLU's common undergraduate Core? Click [here](#) for more information.

Core Assessment: Rubrics and Recommendations

Core Assessment Cycle

Cycle Year	SLO-Based Assessment Actions		
1	Gather artifacts and assess in May & June		
2	Recommend and design/plan changes		
3-5	Implement changes and changes take effect / continued rubric development during yr. 5		
	<u>Assessment Cycle Year One</u>	<u>Assessment Cycle Year Two</u>	<u>Assesment Cycle Year Three</u>
	2022-2023: SLO 1	2023-2024: SLO 1	2024-2025: SLO 1
	2023-2024: SLO 4 & SLO 6	2024-2025: SLO 4 & SLO 6	2025-2026: SLO 4 & SLO 6
	2024-2025: SLO 2 & SLO 9	2025-2026: SLO 2 & SLO 9	2026-2027: SLO 2 & SLO 9
	2025-2026: SLO 3 & SLO 5	2026-2027: SLO 3 & SLO 5	2027-2028: SLO 3 & SLO 5
	2026-2027: SLO 7 & SLO 8	2027-2028: SLO 7 & SLO 8	2028-2029: SLO 7 & SLO 8

The development and implementation of SLU's University Core is informed by a sustained and continuing commitment to assessment of our distinctive approach to general education in the Jesuit, Catholic tradition. SLU's University Core includes nineteen distinct requirements, each of which builds student achievement of our nine foundational Core Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs). Each Core component area contributes to student achievement of our SLOs at either the introductory, developmental, or achievement level. [You can learn more about our University Core learning outcomes and see a curricular map here.](#)

This year, the Core launched the 5-year assessment cycle for SLO 3 (Assess evidence and draw reasoned conclusions) and SLO 5 (Analyze how diverse identities influence lives). In collaboration with the Office of University Assessment, a team of faculty developed and piloted rubrics that will be used to directly assess student artifacts during Core assessment sessions in late May and early June. This year was also pivotal for assessing SLO 2 (assessed in Collaborative Inquiry) and SLO 9 (assessed in Reflection in Action). Core subcommittees reviewed last year's assessment data and brought their findings and recommendations to the UUC. SLO 2 findings suggest revising the Collaborative Inquiry final reflection for clarity and depth; offering professional development on course and assignment design workshops; and expanding Collaborative Inquiry course offerings. For SLO 9, recommendations focus on streamlining communication with faculty and co-curricular leaders about the final reflection, along with more assignment design workshops—especially for academic internships.

Final SLO 2 and SLO 9 reports will be approved by the UUC in May and subsequently posted on the Core website.

Thank You!



As this academic year comes to a close, we want to thank all members of the University who have worked with and supported the Core this year. It would not be possible to offer our students an intentional, impactful undergraduate general education without you, and we are deeply thankful for your commitment to SLU students. We look forward to seeing you again in Fall 2026!

Upcoming Events and Deadlines

- | | |
|------------------|---|
| April 21 | Core Instructor Coffee, 8:30 - 9:30 am
Verhaegen Hall, Room 219 |
| May 5 | Ignite Seminar Workshop-Madrid, 9:30-12:00 pm,
via Zoom |
| May 6 | Final UCC Meeting of AY 2025-26, 9:00 - 10:45 am
Chaifetz School of Business |
| May 8 | Ignite Seminar Workshop-STL, 12:00 - 4:00 pm
Pius Library |
| August 14 | Ignite Seminar Workshop-STL, 12:00 - 4:00 pm
Pius Library |

September 1

Ignite Seminar Workshop-Madrid, 9:30-12:00 pm
via Zoom

September 2

First UUCB Meeting of AY 2026-27, 9:00-10:45
Chaifetz School of Business

[Full List of Core Events](#)



Questions? Email core@slu.edu

University Undergraduate Core
3634 Lindell Blvd., Verhaegen Hall Room 212A
St. Louis, MO 63108