

# News From the Core

March 2026

## Core Happenings: Looking Back / Looking Forward

This spring, the first cohort of students on the new Core will cross the graduation stage at commencement. These students began their time at SLU in Ignite Seminars and Cura Personalis 1 courses and are the first group to experience the Core curriculum in its entirety. As this inaugural Core cohort graduates, we asked several of our original Core Associate Directors and our graduating Undergraduate Core Fellows to share what the Core has meant to them over the years.



### ***Looking Back: David Kaplan, Associate Director for Collaborative Inquiry***

The first group of Associate Directors began their work in July 2020 to make the Core a reality for all SLU students. Throughout this spring semester, we are asking several of these Associate Directors to look back over their past two terms and to share insights about some of the challenges and successes they experienced while helping to build and establish a University-wide general education curriculum here at Saint Louis University.

As the original Associate Director for Collaborative Inquiry, Dr. David Kaplan, Professor in the Department of Management in the Chaifetz School of Business, has helped develop and grow the Collaborative Inquiry requirement of the Core into what it is today. Dr. Kaplan views Collaborative Inquiry as a place where professors take a step back and give students an opportunity to share their expertise as they wrestle with enduring questions. This Core area also encourages students to look for new opportunities and take a chance on something while they still have time. For Dr. Kaplan, Collaborative Inquiry is truly centered on students. He notes, "A Collaborative Inquiry course really does change semester by semester because it depends the students in the room--their interests, areas of expertise, and personalities."

On a personal level, Dr. Kaplan says that one of the most impactful aspects of being Associate Director of the Core has been building connections and watching people from diverse disciplines across the University approach similar Collaborative Inquiry questions in their own ways. These conversations

have also led him to reflect on ways to improve his own teaching craft. Dr. Kaplan is excited to watch Collaborative Inquiry evolve, especially as it moves under the leadership of the incoming Associate Director of Open Seminars. For Kaplan, the connections between the two Open Seminars--Ignite and Collaborative Inquiry--are already there. Both Core areas are an invitation to openness, asking students to reflect on who they are and what they bring to their learning experience. And ultimately, in Ignite and Collaborative Inquiry alike, students consider how they individually and collectively can effect change for the betterment of the others.



### ***Looking Forward: Amanda Kovathana, Senior, Undergraduate Core Fellow***

Early on in its development, the Core invited undergraduates to join the work of curricular development and consciousness raising about the Core. These Undergraduate Core Fellows have a unique perspective on the shape and impact of the Core on students' intellectual, social, emotional, and spiritual experience and growth. Throughout this spring semester, we are asking our graduating Core Fellows to look forward to how they believe the Core has uniquely prepared them for their next steps beyond the University.

Amanda Kovathana, senior Biology major, joined the Core as an Undergraduate Core Fellow this academic year. In her video, Amanda reflects on how the Core helps all students engage in different ways of thinking to ultimately become people who think critically and creatively. The Core, designed around *cura personalis*, provides a path towards well-roundedness, which, for Amanda, is necessary to become people who care about and do

good in the communities around them. You can hear the rest of Amanda's story in her video above.

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## Core Workshops @ SLU-Madrid



SLU-Madrid faculty gathered to hear a summary of Core assessment efforts and consider how they might use the Transparency in Teaching and Learning Framework ([TILT](#)) to design or redesign an assignment in a Core class. Faculty members used the TILT framework to analyze a current assignment and then reflected on that assignment in conversation with their colleagues. Thanks to all who came out to the workshops!

## In the Core Classroom: @ SLU-Madrid



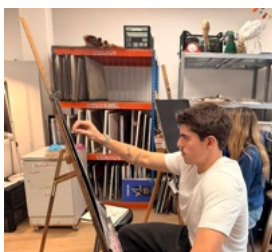
### Core Instructor of the Year

Charles El Mir, faculty member in the Department of Engineering, recently won the 2025-26 Core Instructor of the Year award at SLU-Madrid. This award is wholly orchestrated by students participating in the CAPP (Core Assessment Portfolio Pilot) program; nominations for Core Instructor of the Year are solicited and then finalists are selected by the students. Dr. El Mir is a beloved faculty member and is truly a champion for not only his students but also for SLU's Core. Congratulations, Dr. El Mir!

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In Luana Fischer's Photojournalism class, which counts for *Eloquentia Perfecta: Creative Expression*, students consider how photojournalism intersects with ethical public discourse. Through Adobe Photoshop, students learn how to manipulate raw images to stay as true to the original experience as possible.



In Drawing 1 & Drawing 2, students express themselves creatively through realistic and imaginative drawings and paintings as part of the Core's ***Eloquentia Perfecta: Creative Expression*** requirement.

"Mujeres, faldas!" were the words that began this flamenco dance class. Students donned polka skirts that swayed as they kept time with the music. In this ***Eloquentia Perfecta: Creative Expression*** class, music motivates the students to learn to move and express themselves in new ways and cultivate critical thinking skills through engagement with a creative process.

In this ***Eloquentia Perfecta: Oral and Visual Communication*** course, students engage in a creative reading of a play. Through embodiment of a character, students learn to consider voice, tone, audience, and body language as they develop their ability to communicate both orally and visually for their peers and society at large.

## Looking Inward / Enacting Hope: *Cura Personalis 2*



The University Counseling Center at SLU-Madrid provides several opportunities for students to engage in mindfulness while also fulfilling their *Cura Personalis* (CP2) requirement. One opportunity is the Looking Inward retreat, is a transformative day retreat in the Sierra de Guadarrama mountains pictured above. On this retreat, students explore their purpose, values and passions through self-examination exercises that include personal and group

reflections, guided meditations, and yoga. This day-long experience is designed for students to be able to pause and get to know what it is that moves them as people, while tending to their minds, bodies and souls.

This semester, the Counseling Center is also offering a new CP2 experience entitled Enacting Hope. Through a series of thematic sessions held across the semester, students reflect on their life story, connect to their purpose, and explore creative ways to express and share their unique gifts. By tapping into their individual strengths and understanding the impact of interconnectedness, students learn to channel their energy to effect positive change on their communities. These reflective conversations spur students to action and to "enact hope" within the spaces they find themselves.

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## Upcoming Events and Deadlines

**March 24**

Core Brown Bag, 12:00 - 1:00 pm  
Verhaegen Hall, Room 219

**April 8**

Core Student Workshop, 4:30 - 6:00 pm  
Pius Library, Room 010

**April 21**

Core Instructor Coffee, 8:30 - 9:30 am  
Verhaegen Hall, Room 219

**May 6**

Final UCC Meeting of AY 2025-26

[Full List of Core Events](#)



Questions? Email [core@slu.edu](mailto:core@slu.edu)

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