USM Core Curriculum
Call for proposals for Thematic Clusters

Deadline rolling

The Core Curriculum Committee invites proposals for Thematic Clusters in the new USM Core Curriculum effective fall 2011. Courses included in a proposed cluster need not yet meet all of the Cluster outcomes and characteristics (see p. 3), but must include writing as a form of learning and assessment.

To facilitate scheduling and planning, proposals must indicate instructor(s), course scheduling and offerings in the past 2 years, and any existing pre-requisites. The most recent course syllabus must be included in the proposal. The CCC will contact cluster faculty via e-mail for syllabi once a cluster proposal is submitted.

In submitting a course for inclusion in a cluster, the faculty member commits to sharing syllabi with other cluster faculty, and attending at least one meeting of faculty in the cluster to discuss cluster planning. See below for proposal requirements.

Clusters must include a minimum of five and a maximum of twelve courses. The fewer the courses included in the cluster, the more frequently those courses must be offered to insure student ability to complete the cluster requirement in a timely manner.

Prerequisites for any particular cluster course are established by the home department.

Any individual course may be included in more than one cluster, but the course must address the learning outcomes of all of the clusters in which it is included, and the course instructor must adhere to the requirements of cluster planning and assessment (see course characteristic number 5) for all of the clusters in which the course is included.

Proposal requirements: Please submit proposals electronically as a Word document, with the following:

- Cluster name
- Brief description of the focus of the cluster
- Course(s) for inclusion in the cluster (please list prefix, number and course title)
- Course instructor(s), name(s) and department affiliation(s)
- Departmental notification
- Previous 2 year schedule for each course, specifying semester and days/times/campuses for which the course was scheduled
- Pre-requisites
- Copy of most recent course syllabus to be sent by participating faculty to smcwilms@usm.maine.edu

A table for submitting cluster information is included. Proposals may be submitted utilizing this table or they may be submitted in another format, whichever is easiest.
Thematic Clusters Proposal Form
Name of faculty member submitting proposal:
Cluster name:
Cluster description:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course prefix, number, title</th>
<th>Instructor name</th>
<th>Department notification/approval?</th>
<th>Prerequisites</th>
<th>Previous 2 year schedule</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>EXAMPLE</td>
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<td>SOC 358: Sociology of Women’s Work</td>
<td>Laz</td>
<td>SOC. yes</td>
<td>SOC 100; SOC 210; or perm.</td>
<td>Fall semesters only</td>
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Proposal deadline: November, 19, 2010 and rolling. Send proposals to smcwilms@usm.maine.edu Please ask participating faculty to e-mail their syllabi to smcwilms@usm.maine.edu.

Information on approved clusters is available below

http://www.usm.maine.edu/core/thematic-clusters
Thematic Clusters

Thematic clusters provide students with opportunities to explore an issue, theme or topic from a variety of perspectives. The clusters encourage students to integrate their learning by juxtaposing competing and complementary ways of framing complex issues and problems at a more advanced level.

Learning Outcomes

Students completing a thematic cluster will

1. develop a broader and more comprehensive knowledge of an issue or topic than is achieved by a single disciplinary perspective;
2. understand and articulate orally and in writing how subjects are approached and framed from different disciplinary perspectives;
3. gather, interpret and use information at a level appropriate to the courses in the cluster.

Cluster Characteristics

Clusters will include between 5 and 12 existing or new courses from different departments at the 200-level or above.

1. Students must take a total of three courses in the cluster from at least two different prefixes and can count only one course that could be used toward fulfilling their major.
2. Cluster faculty will provide a 3-year rotation schedule for cluster offerings. A cluster must be available for a minimum of 5 years.
3. A minor may substitute for a cluster if it requires at least 15 credit hours and comes from outside the student’s major department. Departments offering multiple minors must specify how students taking a major and a minor in the same department will satisfy Cluster learning outcome number one.
4. All cluster courses employ writing as a part of learning and assessment.
5. Cluster faculty will plan and assess the cluster’s coherence, share syllabi and explicitly articulate overlap and integration. Such integration could take a variety of forms: a distinct course, a sequence of assignments within or across courses, sequencing of courses, journaling, etc.
6. Each cluster is encouraged to develop co-curricular activities and opportunities for the practical application of what is learned in the cluster.
7. Any prerequisites for the cluster must be clearly identified. Individual course prerequisites will continue to be established by the home department.
8. Continuing students wishing to take a cluster course at another institution must get prior approval from the assistant provost for undergraduate programs or the chair of the Core Curriculum Committee for the course to count toward the cluster requirement. The assistant provost and the CCC chair will consult with cluster faculty as appropriate on these prior approvals.