Report on the University Core Curriculum Survey

The Faculty Senate Executive Committee has charged the Faculty Rights, Privileges and Responsibilities Committee (FRPR) to monitor the implementation of the KU Core Curriculum by administering a survey in FY17 for a third year.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The survey distributed by the Faculty Rights, Privileges and Responsibilities Committee (FRPR) in the Spring semester of 2017 to assess the faculty response to the Core Curriculum and its implementation resulted in insightful and useful results for the University Core Curriculum Committee, Faculty Governance, and University Administration. This was the third year FRPR was charged with distributing a survey to the Lawrence Campus faculty regarding the Core Curriculum. The survey instrument used in the third year remained mostly intact from the previous year, with a few minor wording adjustments.

The overall response rate was 10%[1] (compared with 16% in 2016). Representation is unknown since departmental affiliation and status were not required to be reported by respondents. 41 of the 155 respondents indicated their school affiliation:

School	Count	%
Architecture Design and Planning	1	2%
Business	4	10%
CLAS	22	54%
Education	2	5%
Engineering	7	17%
Journalism	2	5%
Languages Literatures & Cultures	1	2%
Music	1	2%
Arts	1	2%

Course Selection and Approval Process

- *2017: 48% are not satisfied with course selection process (55% in 2016)*
- 2017: Major themes from comments:
  - *Process tedious and inefficient*
  - *Course approval perceived as arbitrary and political*
  - *Lack of communication or feedback from UCCC*
  - *Not enough science or technology courses*
  - *Transfer courses do not go through same process*
- 2016: Major themes from comments:
  - *Inefficient process*
  - *Lack of feedback from UCCC and the other level of reviews*
  - *Perception of bias*
  - *Allows students more academic options*
  - *Improving course assessment*
- 2015: Major themes from comments:
  - *Lack of feedback and timeliness* from the UCCC
  - *Lack of faculty involvement* in the overall process
  - *Unclear requirements* for course inclusion
  - Perceptions of *"departmental favoritism"*

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[1] Based on Faculty Rank, Fall 2016 (Librarians and Administrators were excluded because they do not have instructional duties.)

http://oirp.ku.edu/sites/oirp.ku.edu/files/files/Profiles/2016/6-115.pdf

Course Restructuring
- ***2017:** 61% did not have to restructure courses to meet Core requirements*
- ***2016:** 70% did not have to restructure courses to meet Core requirements*
  ***2015:** 63% did not have to restructure courses*
- Major themes from 2017 comments:
  - Minor changes were made in assignments and objectives
  - Added ethical decision-making
  - Some course elements were emphasized at the expense of others
  - Emphasis placed on skills, has meant shifting focus from disciplinary goals

Impact on Course Enrollment & Credit Hours
- Majority (44%) indicated there was no effect on enrollment, 21% marginally or significantly increased, 35% marginally or significantly decreased
- Majority (79%) indicated no effect on number of credit hours to graduate

Impact on Student Assessment
- Majority (57%) were neutral, somewhat agreed (20%), or strongly agreed (10%), that Core Curriculum had impacted their ability to assess students
- Major themes from comments about Unit's assessment process:
  - Assessment already accomplished through accreditation process
  - Assessing student thinking is always more difficult than assessing their knowledge

- We do a good job collecting data, but need to work on the feedback loop
- Huge time commitment, not enough resources provided

RECOMMENDATIONS

Consistent themes of concern relate to the lack of feedback, and a perception of lack of transparency or consistency in review. It is the opinion of FRPR that these could best be addressed by increasing the transparency of reporting beyond the targeted response from UCCC to each applicant.

As such, we strongly urge governance to task UCCC with reporting unit level metrics to include number of course applications by core goal, number of course approvals by core goal, number of course revisions required for approval by core goal, and number of course rejections by core goal. Such metrics should be readily available to the entire community on the UCCC website, and should be maintained at least annually. It is the belief of FRPR that such reporting may help with faculty *perceptions* of process, which may or may not be erroneous.

In addition, we strongly urge UCCC to add to its application a request of the applicant for the ability to share the application with the broader community. In this manner, the UCCC could then identify and make readily visible on its website examples of best practice.

Finally, we recommend continuing this annual survey as a specific charge to FRPR, in order to ascertain whether the reporting identified above leads to improved perceptions of the process.

SURVEY ANALYSIS

METHODS

- Survey developed by FRPR in March 2017
- Distributed by FRPR via the KU Lawrence Faculty email distribution list
- Available for response March 1-31st, 2017
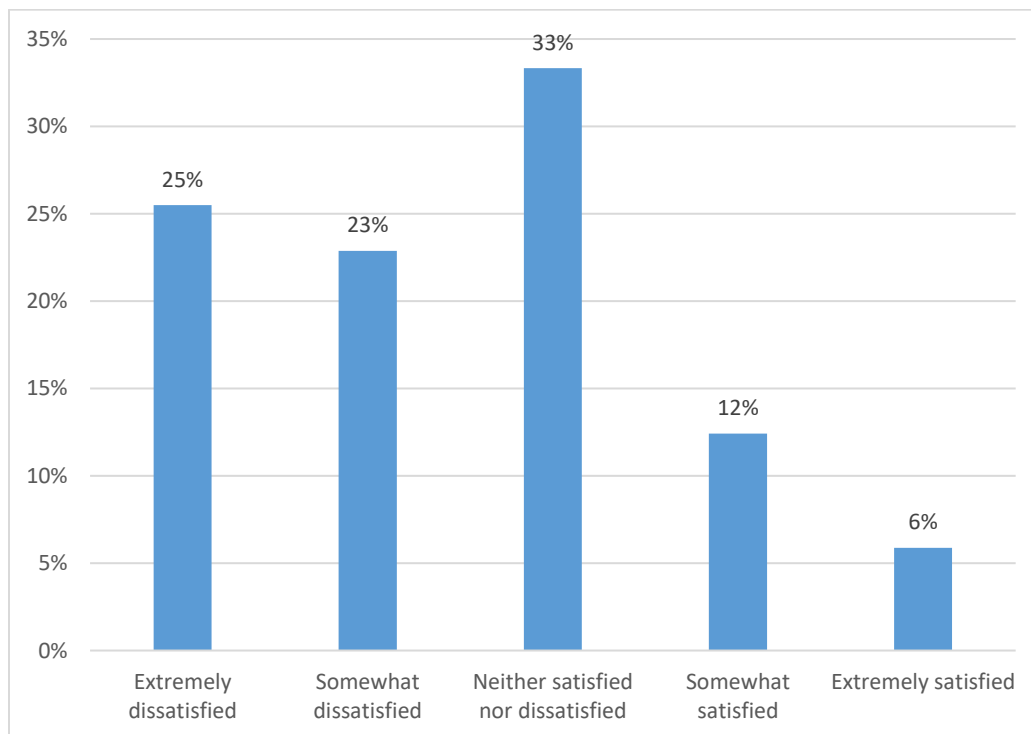- Only members of FRPR had access to the raw data

RESULTS

- 155 completed surveys, which is a 10% response rate from the Lawrence campus faculty
- Three major topics included in the survey:
  - Course selection and approval
  - Course enrollment and student credit hours
  - Student assessment
- Additional analysis of optional final comments section at the end of the survey

Course Selection/Approval Process

Survey Question:
Are you satisfied with the way courses are selected for inclusion in the Core Curriculum?

(Total responses: 153)

- Slightly less than half (48%) of the respondents are at least somewhat dissatisfied with the course selection process

- One-third (33%) of the respondents are neutral on the process
- 18% of the respondents are at least somewhat satisfied with the course selection process
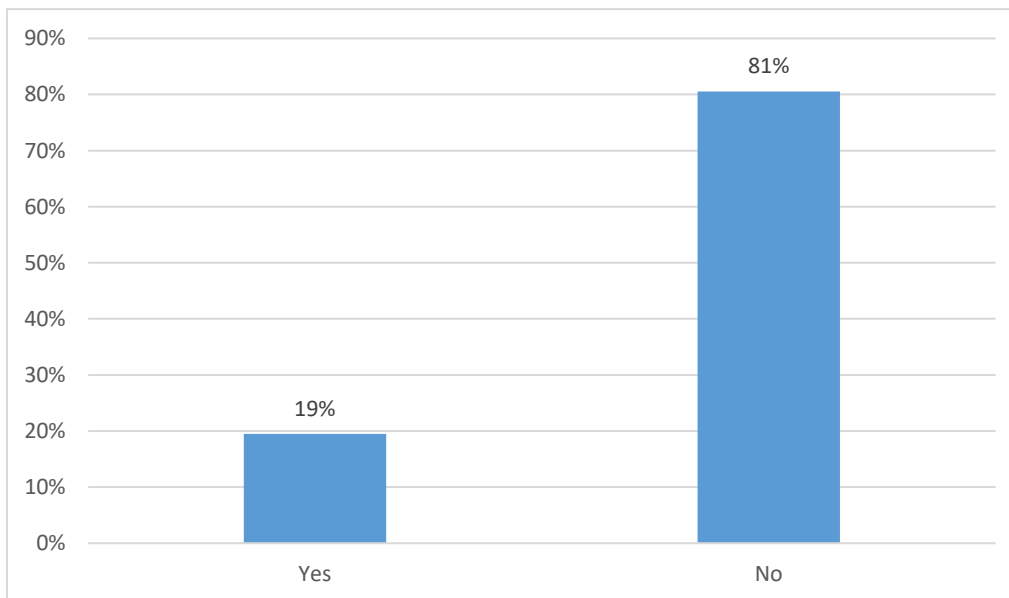
Open Ended Reponses (72 responses):

- 88% negative
- 4% positive
- 8% neutral or not applicable

Major Themes:
- Positive Themes
  - Some faculty the process has worked well and was straightforward
  - One commented: "The reviews are not rubber stamps, but are not overly burdensome, either. The biggest problem is getting enough members to actively participate, especially students."
- Negative Themes
  - Process is too tedious, bureaucratic, paperwork is burdensome
  - Decisions are opaque, take too long, and appear arbitrary
  - Feedback not provided, poor communication by UCCC
  - Does not recognize special expertise developed by certain fields
  - CIM software difficult to deal with
  - Transfer courses do not go through same process
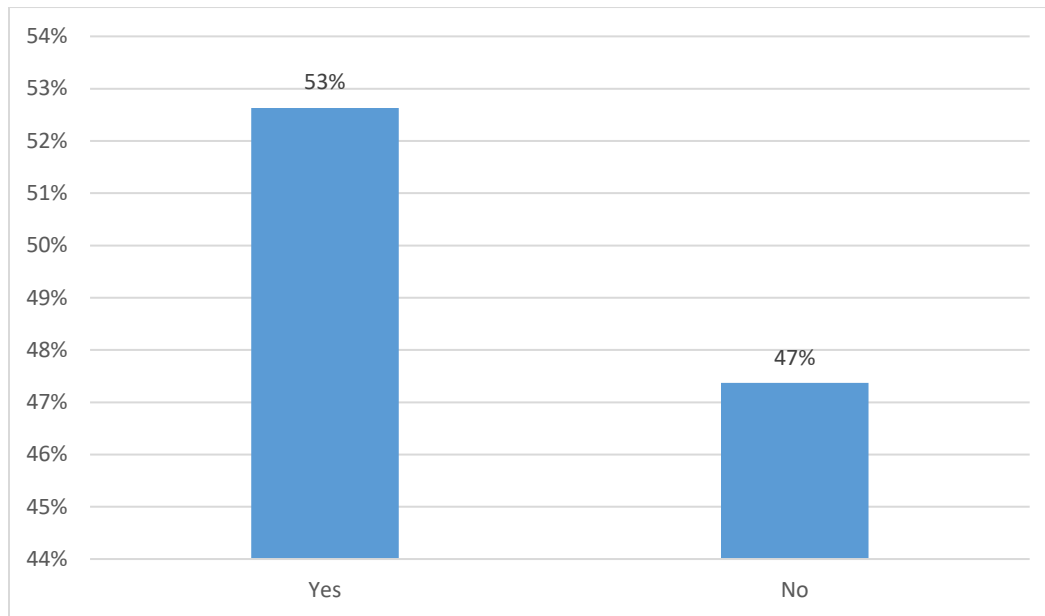
Survey Question:

Did you submit any course for approval in the Core Curriculum that was rejected?

(Total responses: 155)

Survey Question:

With your rejected course, were you encouraged, or required, to change your course so that it could be included?
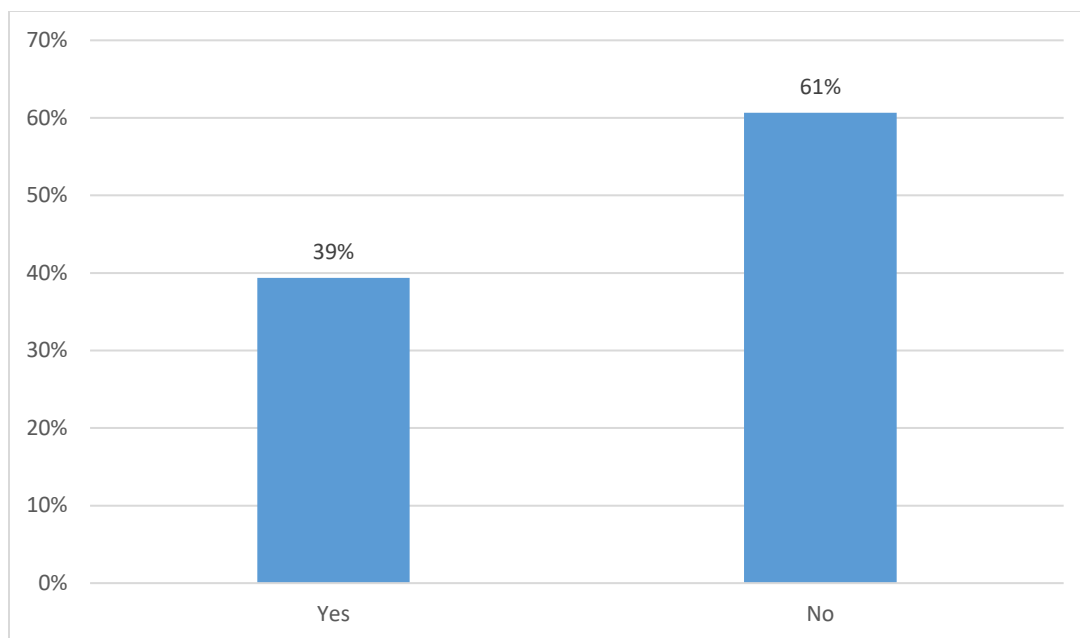

(Total responses: 19)

Open Ended Responses (11 responses):

Major Themes:
- No feedback after rejection
- No instructions on how to appeal
- Found process "befuddling"
- Time-consuming process

Survey Question:

Have you had to restructure any of your courses to meet the requirements of the Core Curriculum?

(Total responses: 155)

Open Ended Responses (43 responses):
- 23% positive
- 51% negative
- 26% neutral/not applicable

Major Themes:

- Minor changes were made in assignments and objectives
- Added ethical decision-making
- Some course elements were emphasized at the expense of others
- Emphasis placed on skills, has meant shifting focus from disciplinary goals

Survey Question:

Has one of your courses approved for the core curriculum been withdrawn in the absence of a request from you?

Answer	Response
Yes	2%
No	98%

(Total responses: 153)

Please select the reason for removing the course from the Core:

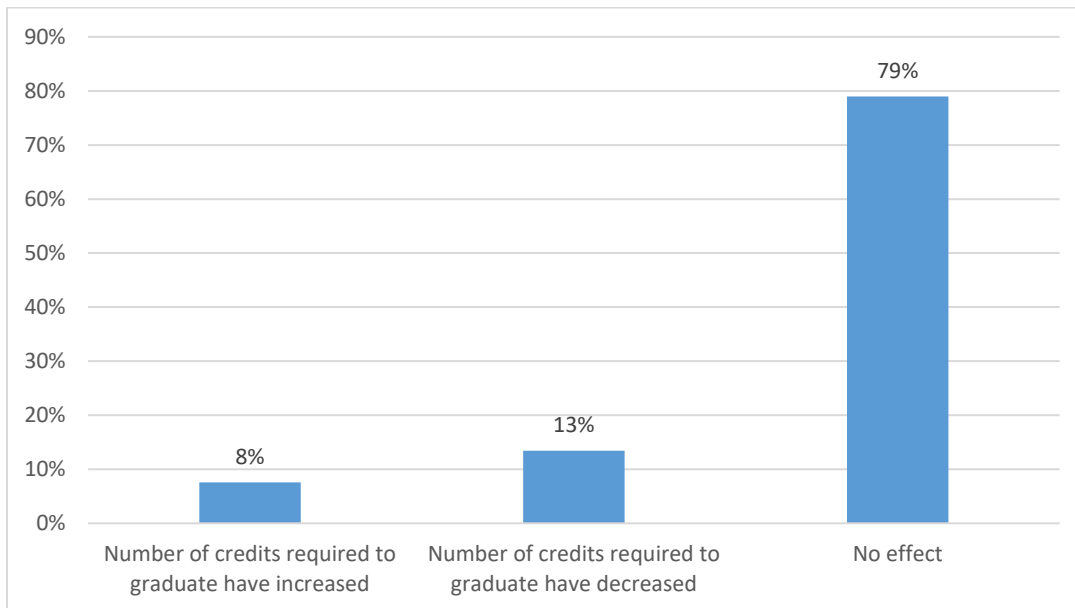| Answer	Response
UCCC determined course assessment no longer met stated objectives	1

Unit/School requested course no longer be considered for meeting core curriculum requirements	0
Administration requested course no longer be considered for meeting core curriculum requirements	1
Other:	1

Other:

Who knows

Course Enrollment and Credit Hours
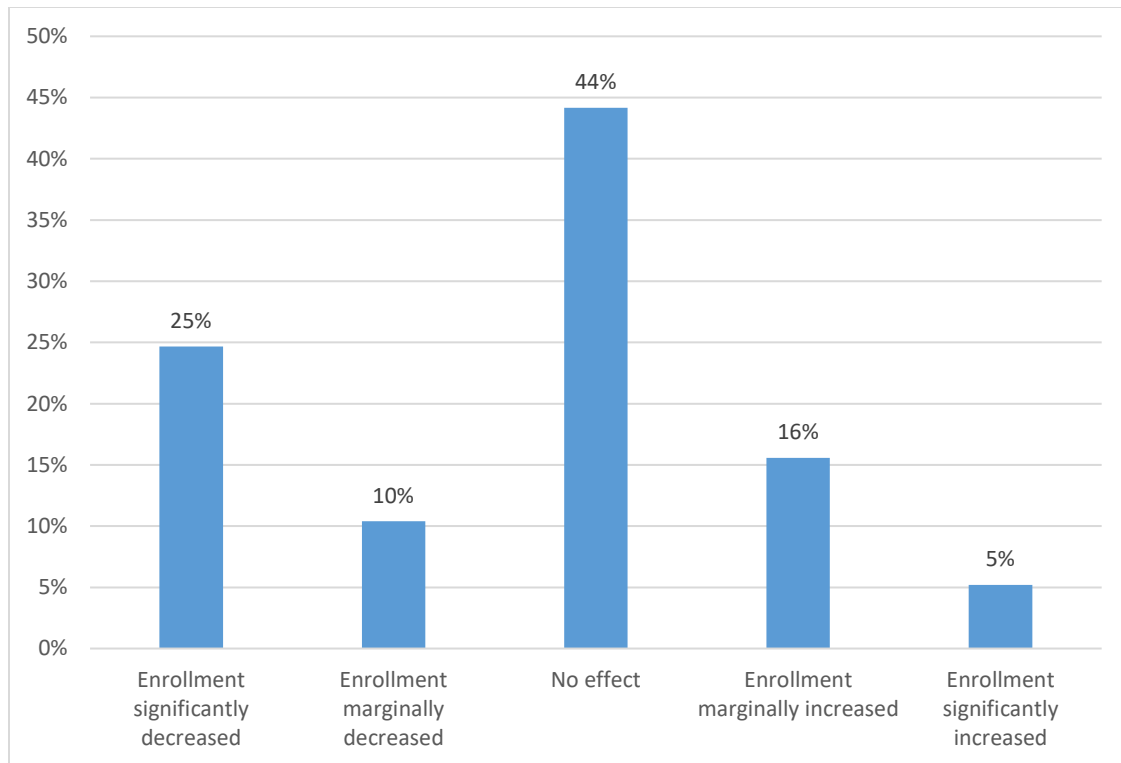
Survey Question:

Has the implementation of the Core Curriculum had an effect on the number of credits required for students to graduate in your curriculum?

(Total responses: 119)

Survey Question:

Has the implementation of the Core Curriculum had an effect on enrollment in any of your courses?
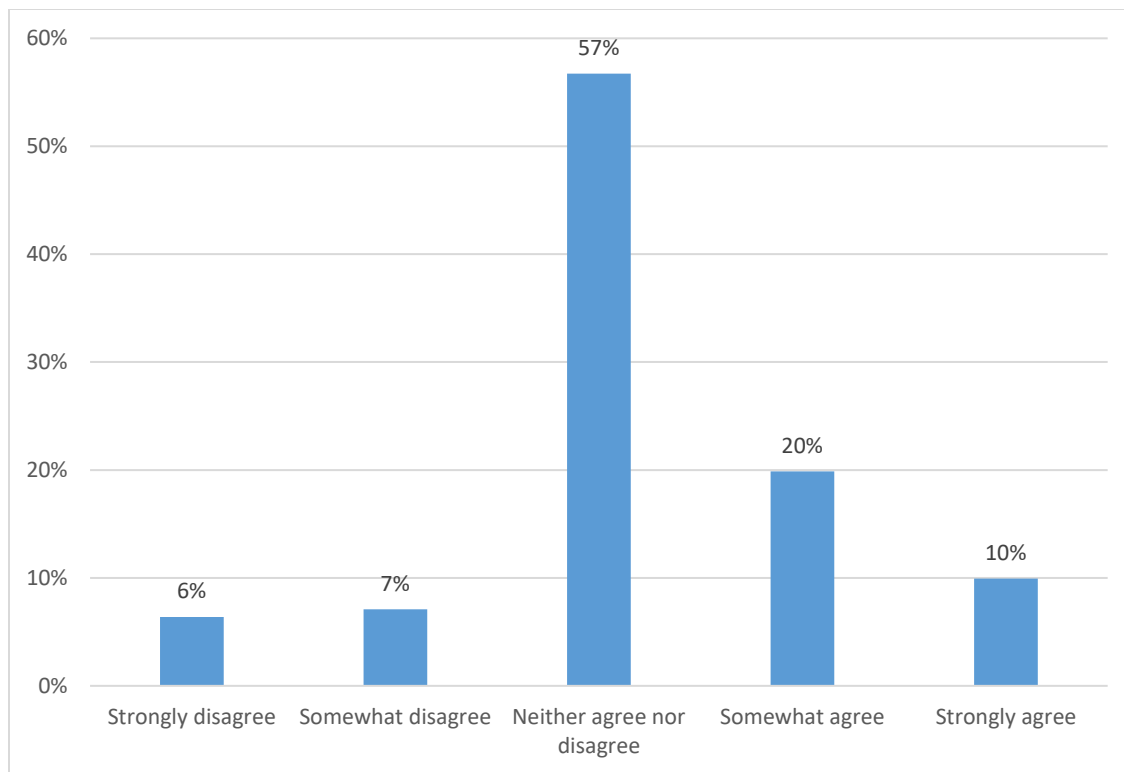
(Total Reponses: 154)
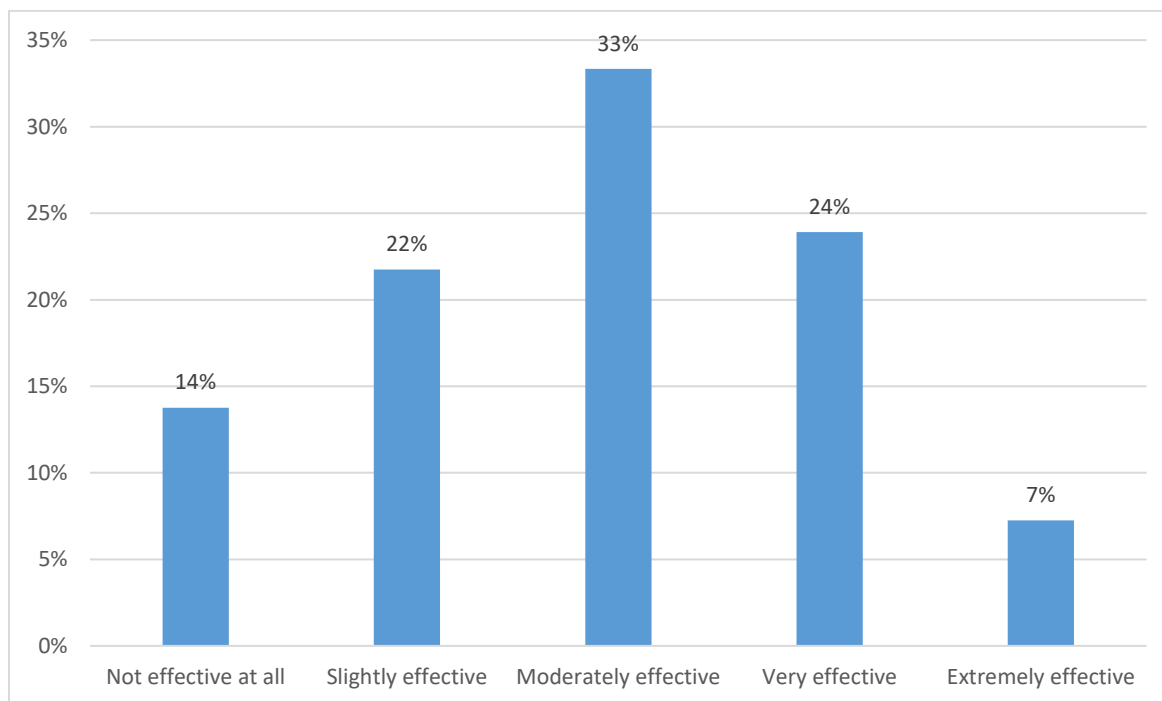
Student Assessment

Survey Question:
Do you think the Core Curriculum has impacted your ability to assess students in the manner you think is appropriate?

(Total responses: 142)

Survey Question:

How effective is your unit's course assessment process?

(Total responses: 138)

Open Ended Responses (48):

Major Themes:
- Assessment already accomplished through accreditation process
- Assessing student thinking is always more difficult than assessing their knowledge
- We do a good job collecting data, but need to work on the feedback loop
- Burdensome and a huge time commitment, not enough resources provided

Survey Question:

Do you think instructors have received sufficient resources from the University to meet the requirements of the Core?

Answer	
Yes	43%
No	57%

Open Ended Responses (54 responses)

Major Themes:

- Not aware of resources or services available (i.e. CTE)
- No clear guidance on criteria or how to present a proposal
- Process is time-consuming, KU could do more to incentivize or compensate effort
- Increased obligations without additional resources provided

Optional Comments
(Total 42 responses):

- 14% positive
- 71% negative
- 14% neutral/not applicable

Major Themes

- Positive themes:
    - General support for the goals and outcomes of the Core
    - Students have additional options
- Negative themes:
    - Lengthy and cumbersome process for approval
    - Several requests to make process simpler and more streamlined
    - Current system of assessing outcomes from the core is ineffective

Submitted by the Faculty, Rights, Privileges and Responsibilities Committee 4/12/17

APPENDIX: SURVEY INSTRUMENT

Core Curriculum Survey: Year 3

The Faculty Senate Executive Committee has charged the Faculty Rights, Privileges and Responsibilities Committee (FRPR) with conducting a "survey to assess present faculty response to the Core Curriculum and its implementation" for a third year. On behalf of the committee members, we are requesting your evaluation of the Core Curriculum and its implementation.

Your name and department is optional. You will never be personally associated with your survey responses.

The survey will take about 5-10 minutes to complete.

Course Selection

	Extremely dissatisfied	Somewhat dissatisfied	Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	Somewhat satisfied	Extremely satisfied
Are you satisfied with the way courses are selected for inclusion in the Core Curriculum?	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍

Please write any additional comments about your satisfaction or dissatisfaction with the way courses are selected for inclusion in the Core Curriculum:

Did you submit any course for approval in the Core Curriculum that was rejected?

❍ Yes (1)
❍ No (2)

Answer If Did you submit any course for approval in the Core Curriculum that was rejected? Yes Is Selected

With your rejected course, were you encouraged, or required, to change your course so that it could be included?

❍ Yes (1)
❍ No (2)
❍ Additional Comments: (3) _____

Have you had to restructure any of your courses to meet the requirements of the Core Curriculum?

❍ Yes (1)
❍ No (2)

If you had to restructure a course, please describe your experience with course restructuring, for example, what kind of changes were made and how, if at all, did these alter your classroom options?

Has one of your courses approved for the core curriculum been withdrawn in the absence of a request from you?

❍ Yes (4)
❍ No (5)

Please select the reason for removing the course from the Core:

❍ UCCC determined course assessment no longer met stated objectives (1)
❍ Unit/School requested course no longer be considered for meeting core curriculum requirements (2)
❍ Administration requested course no longer be considered for meeting core curriculum requirements (3)
❍ Other: (4) _____

Has the implementation of the Core Curriculum had an effect on the number of credits required for students to graduate in your curriculum?

❍ Number of credits required to graduate have increased (1)
❍ Number of credits required to graduate have decreased (2)
❍ No effect (3)
❍ Additional comments: (4) _____

Impact on Enrollment

	Enrollment significantly decreased	Enrollment marginally decreased	No effect	Enrollment marginally increased	Enrollment significantly increased
Has the implementation of the Core Curriculum had an effect on enrollment in any of your courses? (1)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍

Impact on Student Assessment

	Strongly disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Strongly agree
Has the Core Curriculum has impacted your ability to assess students in the manner you think is appropriate? (1)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍

Effective Assessment

	Not effective at all (18)	Slightly effective (19)	Moderately effective (20)	Very effective (21)	Extremely effective (22)
How effective is your unit's course assessment process? (1)	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍

Please write any additional comments about your views on the effectiveness of your unit's assessment process:

Do you think instructors have received sufficient resources from the University to meet the requirements of the Core?

❍ Yes (1)
❍ No (2)

Please explain why you think instructors have or have not received sufficient resources to meet requirements of the Core:

Please share any additional comments with the FRPR committee:

(Optional) School:

(Optional) Department: