

Common Curriculum Mission Statement

The common curriculum at Loyola University New Orleans is the cornerstone of its nearly 500-year distinctive Jesuit tradition of connecting educational excellence with social justice. The mission of the common curriculum is to educate the whole person, a central tenet of the Ignatian vision of education. But what does it mean to educate the whole person? In an address to alumni of Jesuit universities in 1973, Reverend Pedro Arrupe, S.J., describes Jesuit education as “a method that does not limit us to any particular option, but spreads out before us the whole range of practicable options in any given situation; opens up for us a sweeping vision embracing many possibilities, to the end that God himself, in all his tremendous originality, may trace out our path for us.”

To begin the process of educating the whole person, the common curriculum equips us to understand the world as it is and to work to make it better, to focus on the values that shape our lives, to free ourselves from prejudice and unexamined views, and to acquire knowledge and skills that inspire us to act and reflect critically on our actions as we seek the creation of a more just world.

To promulgate critical thinking, the common curriculum embraces an interdisciplinary approach to learning, with an emphasis on the spiritual and intellectual, the moral and ethical, the natural and social scientific, the humanistic, and the artistic. These elements are not limited to the intellectual and the academic self, but are central to the whole person and are integral to sustaining a learning community whose goal is understanding and serving the greater New Orleans community and the world.

According to the founder of the Society of Jesus, Ignatius Loyola, acting justly involves using one’s knowledge, skills, and values to be men and women with and for others. However, he views acting justly as insufficient unless one is also a “contemplative in action,” one who reflects on knowledge and experience to become selfless in the service of others. Critical reflection is woven throughout the philosophy and pedagogy of the common curriculum as a means of cultivating this contemplative stance and encouraging thought that engenders just action and service.

The curricular means of becoming a “contemplative in action” includes more than simply a collection of courses. It is an integration of critical components which, taken together, empower students to think critically and reflectively and to act justly. Rooted in the Jesuit Catholic intellectual tradition and the liberal arts and sciences, the common curriculum includes the following highlights:

- The ***First-Year Experience*** serves to transition students into a holistic learning community through interdisciplinary seminars that cultivate habits of critical thinking and commitment to working for a more just world and that engage students in the intellectual life of the university.
- ***Experiential Learning*** replaces one-way lecturing with interaction between faculty and students, and creates an environment of active learning. Experiential learning takes the world into the classroom and moves learning into the world.
- Building both depth and breadth of ***Foundational Knowledge*** across the curriculum, students develop technical skills and high level intellectual competencies while being exposed to diverse fields of study.
- ***Interdisciplinary Connections*** allow students opportunities to view and consider subject matter from various perspectives and approaches, to extend the boundaries of education beyond singular disciplines, and to learn the value of teamwork.
- ***Collaborative Learning and Scholarship*** among students and professors through undergraduate research/scholarship and service promotes the Ignatian vision of a learning *community* where students are learning *with*, as opposed to simply from their professors.
- ***Global Understanding*** offers opportunities for study and service abroad, exposing and integrating students into other languages, cultures, and perspectives.
- ***Service Learning*** links the academic with the altruistic by engaging students in applying their classroom knowledge and skills in addressing real world problems and immersing students in works of service within the larger community.
- The common curriculum highlights the ***Catholic Tradition*** of spirituality and communal engagement, and it values the guidance of our Jesuit community. It embraces the ***Diversity*** of the New Orleans community and the world by including perspectives of disadvantaged groups, whose marginalization is a focus of our concern for social justice. And, it enlarges students’ understanding of their own contemporary historical context by exploring the development of modernity beginning from ***Pre-Modern*** history and knowledge. These concepts flow throughout the entire undergraduate experience and across the common curriculum.
- The culminating ***Senior-Year Experience***, which is tied to senior seminar/capstone courses within students’ majors, offers students opportunities for bridging foundational knowledge, reflective thinking, and examination of personal values in the context of their major areas of study, for developing their vocational calling, and for preparing their transition from Loyola to the larger world after graduation.

Loyola’s holistic curriculum, which is deeply grounded in Jesuit values and the liberal arts and sciences, is designed to form “students as scholars” who upon graduation have understanding of epistemological theories as well as disciplinary content knowledge, critical thinking, self awareness, and a commitment to lifelong learning and lifelong service. The curricular emphasis on ethics, inclusive excellence, international education and global preparedness, and commitment to faculty/student collaborative scholarship and community engaged learning and service are clear hallmarks of Loyola’s distinctive, transformational educational experience.