

## Academic Program Review (APR) and Core Program Review Guiding Questions

The far-left column contains questions typically developed as guides for departments beginning self-studies in program review. In the middle column, we have developed a set of questions that helped to guide our self-study in ways unique to the Core curriculum. These are side-by-side questions for easy comparison; there are clear differences as well as some similarities. The far-right column indicates sections and analyses included in our final self-study.

Typical APR Guiding Research Questions	Core APR Guiding Research Questions	Self-study Template Sections & Analyses
<b>Introduction and Context</b>		
How does the program align with the mission and goals of the university? College/School?	How does the core program align with the mission & goals of the university? <i>Across academic units?</i>	History and Overview of USD Core Curriculum Alignment, Development, Structure
How does it contribute uniquely to discipline and university? Respond to community needs?	What are the core's unique features? How do these enhance learning opportunities?	Overview of USD's Core Curriculum Structure ( <a href="#">link to chart</a> )
What special issues arose from previous study/are currently present?	Has the implementation of the new core curriculum been effective?	Results of the collective analyses (see below) affirm the implementation has been effective.
<b>Evidence of Academic Excellence</b>		
<b>Curriculum</b>		
What are the curricular requirements and how do these compare to similar programs (currency)? (No corresponding program area)	How does the core program structure compare to other core curricula at similar institutions? <b>Curricular governance:</b> Are courses approved in a timely manner? How is the committee structure supported?	Comparison Analysis of USD Core with Other Institutions Core Attribute Availability analysis; Core Class Size analysis; Numbers of Attributes per Course analysis (see also Support section of table).
Does the curriculum offer sufficient breadth and depth for the degree?	Are there sufficient courses in each attribute area representing broad Liberal Arts focus and competency areas?	Core Attribute Availability analysis; Core Class Size analysis; Numbers of Attributes per Course analysis.
Is the curriculum aligned with program learning outcomes (PLOs)?	How well do syllabus learning outcomes align with core attribute learning outcomes?	Syllabus Learning Outcomes analysis
Are the courses sequenced and readily available in sequence?	Are there transfer equivalency and sequencing challenges in the core curriculum?	Transfer Credit Analysis; Syllabus Analysis on Core Sequences
How do pedagogy and content respect the diversity of the student body and diversity of thought?	How do the pedagogy and content respect diversity of the student body and diversity of thought in the core?	DISJ preliminary analysis; Senior survey questions on students' perceptions of their learning of DEI learning outcomes in the Core
<b>Faculty (Scholarship and Creativity)</b>		
What are the faculty qualifications and achievements in relation to program's mission and goals?	Who are the faculty teaching in the core curriculum by faculty status?	Faculty Status Analysis
How do faculty members' backgrounds, expertise, and professional work contribute to program academic excellence?	Who are the faculty teaching in the core curriculum by academic unit?	Faculty by Academic Unit Analysis
How are scholarship, creative activity, and curricular and instructional innovations valued, supported, and disseminated?	What types and levels of guidance, support, and development are offered to core curriculum faculty?	Core Assessment Reports and resources, guidance and support that stemmed from the report findings

### Academic Program Review (APR) and Core Program Review Guiding Questions

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<b>Students</b>		
What is the profile of the students? Demographics? Double majors? Minors? FY or Transfer? First gen? Financial need? Honors/societies? Post-grad activities/careers?	What are student perceptions of the core? What core attributes are matriculated students transferring in? Can student characteristics predict core class/major choices?	Analysis of Senior Survey results; Matriculated Transfer Student Core Credit analysis; Future analyses of student characteristics' effects on core class enrollments, perceptions, and major choices.
<b>Student Learning and Success</b>		
Are the students achieving the expected levels of the program learning outcomes?	Are the students achieving the core learning outcomes and at the expected levels?	Core Assessment Reports ( <a href="#">link to Core Assessment</a> )
Are they being retained and graduating in a timely fashion?	How does movement through the core affect retention and graduation?	Future study
Are they prepared to apply advanced study to the world of work?	How does the core add to preparing for the world of work?	Core competency reports; Senior Survey results; FY and Advanced Integration reports (forthcoming); future studies
What issues of inequality or barriers to achievement have you identified? How have assessment results been used to remove or minimize barriers and improve student learning?	What achievement challenges have been identified? How have assessment results helped to identify the need for student and faculty support and development?	Core Assessment Reports; future studies on culturally relevant pedagogy and assessment practices on the core curriculum.
<b>Program Support, Planning and Goals</b>		
<b>Students:</b> Are there sufficient mechanisms in place to assist students with achieving their academic goals and learning development? What efforts have there been to promote equitable advising & mentoring practices?	<b>Students:</b> How are students supported to achieve academic goals in the core? What efforts have there been to promote equitable advising & mentoring practices?	Resources developed based on findings from Core assessment projects; variety of academic student advising and support services and centers across campus; led to one goal in our plan: <i>Nurturing Culture and Community</i>
<b>Faculty:</b> Do program faculty have the support they need to do their work?	<b>Faculty:</b> How have faculty been supported to teach in the core curriculum? <b>Committee:</b> How has the Core Curriculum Committee (CCC) been supported?	Resources from Core assessment projects; collaboratively developed Core rubrics; Center for Educational Excellence; contributed to two goals in our plan: <i>Promote Greater Faculty Stability and Nurturing Culture and Community</i> ; Development of committee resources; contributed to one goal in our plan: <i>Create Formal Onboarding and Rotation Plan for the CCC</i>
<b>Budgetary:</b> What do the operational budget trends (revenues and expenditures) show over a 3–5-year period?	<b>Budgetary:</b> Does the core budget adequately fund the current program and what anticipated trends will affect core expenditures? What staff are needed as support?	Budgetary support section describes current coverage (and anticipated changes). This section describes administrative staff and financial support.
Technology, information literacy resources, facilities and equipment, staff and other resources	These are not assigned to the core but by affiliated departments and services.	See sections above for Faculty and Student Support.



# Telling Your Core or General Education Story in an Academic Program Review

IUPUI Assessment Institute, Indianapolis, IN

October 29, 2024

- ❖ Debbie Finocchio, Interim Core Director and Associate Core Director
- ❖ Carole Huston, Special Assistant, Institutional Research and Effectiveness and Professor of Communication

# Learning Outcomes for This Workshop



1. Reflect on your own Core or GE curriculum as a candidate for Academic Program Review (APR).
2. Consider research questions that would be useful for a GE APR.
3. Review specifics of our Core self-study template and related analyses.
  - ❖ Select questions and/or analyses that could be useful for your institution.
4. Identify offices with which you would collaborate for a GE self-study.

## *Core Curriculum Focus*

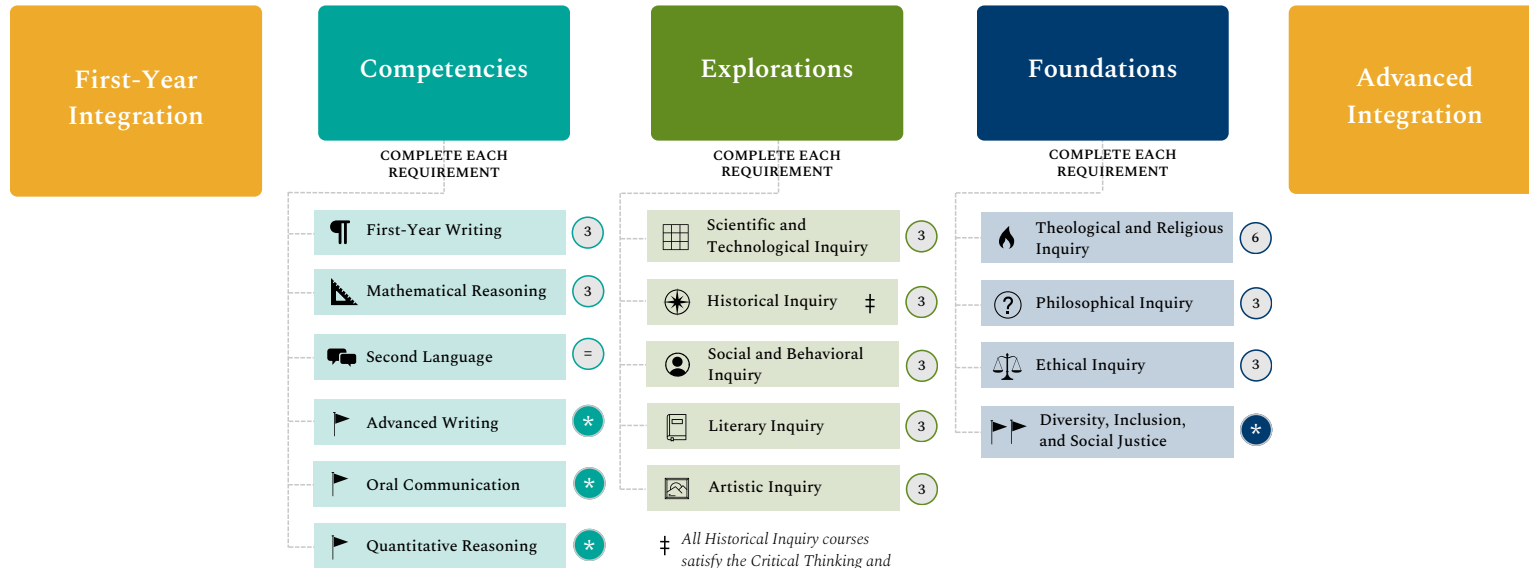
- ❖ Private, **Catholic, Liberal Arts**
- ❖ Doctoral University - High Research Activity (R2)
- ❖ **3 Undergrad Academic Units**
  - ❖ College of Arts & Sciences
  - ❖ Knauss School of Business
  - ❖ Shiley-Marcos School of Engineering
- ❖ 9,110 Enrollment (**UG 5,726**, GR 2,430, Law 954)
- ❖ 1,012 Instructional Faculty

# USD's Core Curriculum



## CORE CURRICULUM

The University of San Diego's Core Curriculum is a signature experience designed to help students make the most of their opportunities at USD. The Core will look different for each student yet perfectly fit individual needs and diverse visions of what each person's future holds.



### KEY

- 3 A minimum of a 3-unit course
  - 6 Two (2) 3-unit courses
  - = Must complete equivalent of course number 201 or higher
  - \* Course with a flagged attribute
- Flagged attributes are attached to various courses. Multiple flagged attributes may be attached to a single course.



# USD's Core Curriculum: History

2010

2011 - 2016

Fall 2017

2023-2024



- Core is an academic program at USD
- No general templates available for this type of program
- Existing academic program templates weren't useful due to:
  - Much greater volume of data to analyze the Core
  - No one discipline owns the Core, but many departments contribute to it



# Institutions Have Different Goals for their Self Studies

*Some possible goals:*

1. Check how current Core/GE program is functioning ← USD's goal
2. Institutional desire to reimagine its Core/GE program
3. Respond to accreditor recommendation



Reflect, Pair, Share

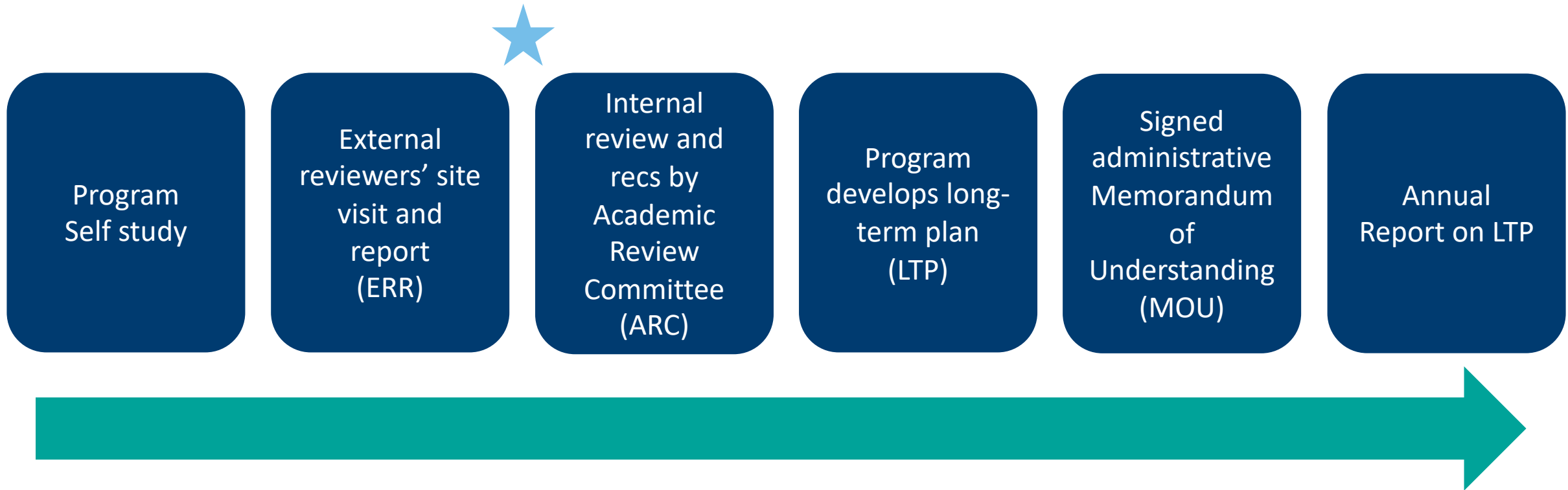


Other goals?

What goal might your institution have?



# Academic Program Review Steps at USD



- Why should we consider treating a GE curriculum like an academic program? (Accrediting recommendation)
  - Subject to periodic review
  - Direct assessment of student learning in core classes outside of programs
  - Increases faculty and student cohesiveness and engagement
- Program review is a catalyst for change (Banta, 2014)
  - Review analyses provide ideas for change and direct evidence for support
  - Shared cross-disciplinary competencies inform student progress and increase faculty engagement (Beauchman & Waldenberger, 2017; Polychronopoulos, et al, 2021; Sloan, et al, 2022)
- Effective review is all about asking the right questions (Eggleton, 2022b)
  - How can Core APR bridge disciplinary silos? What questions do we have in common?
  - What does *our campus* need to know as goals/outcomes for Core APR (including accreditors) and who should be involved?
  - What potential challenges does this study present?
  - How will we use the results and make improvements (close the loop)?

# Big Picture on What We Learned About Core APR



## Team

- Build a team with strong analytical skills
  - Analyses much more complex than department APR
- Identify/utilize collaborations across institution

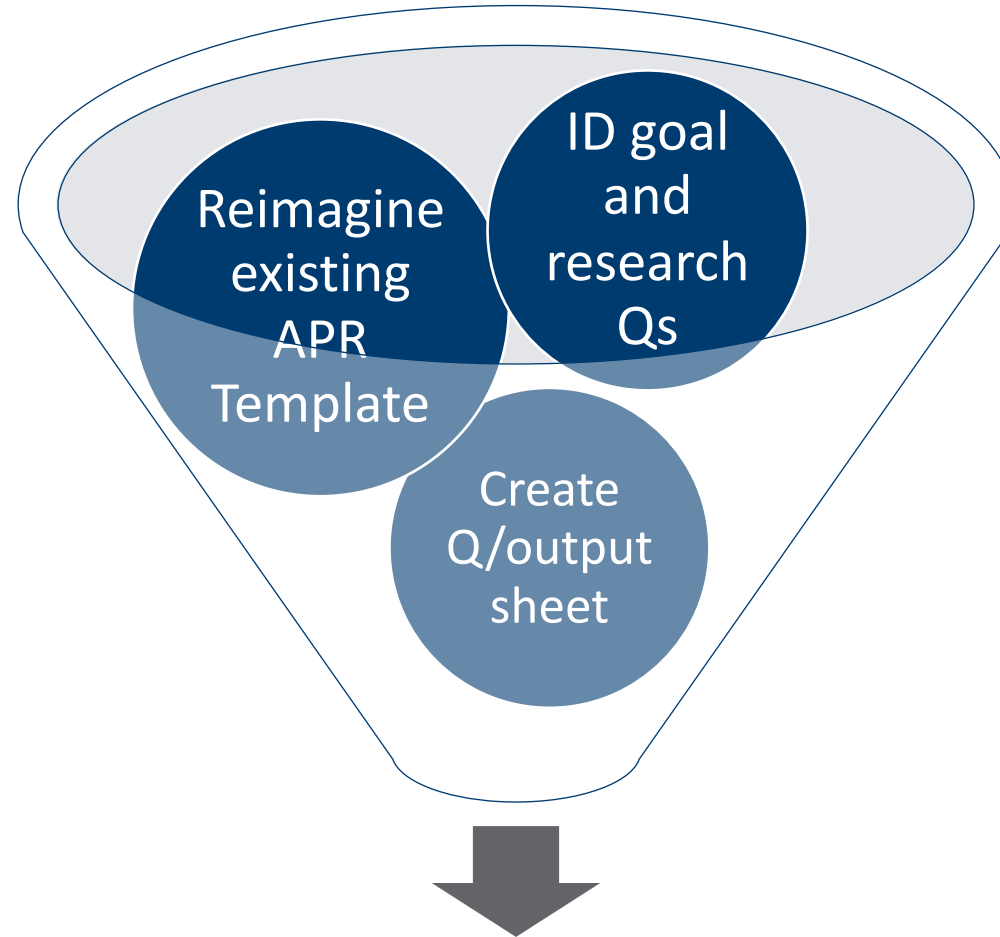
## Questions

- The kinds of questions you ask are different from a departmental APR

## Audience

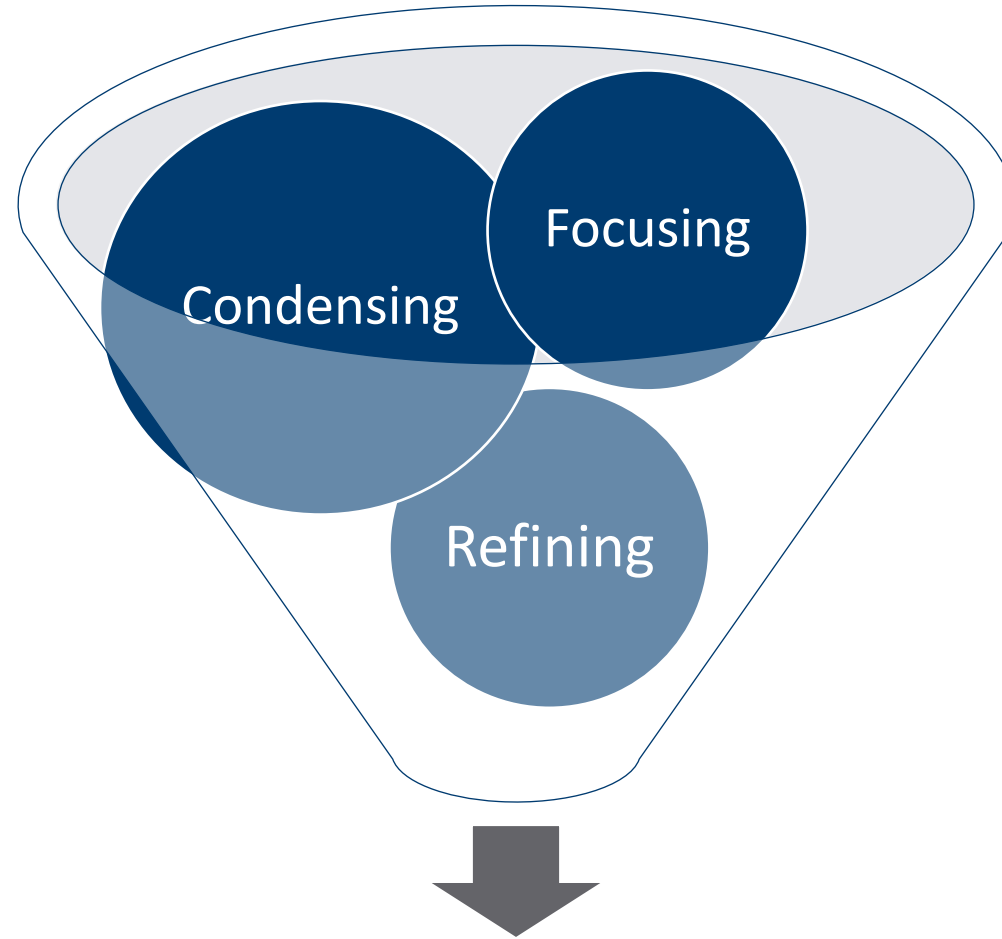
- Findings inform decisions across institution, not just one department
  - Deans, Program Directors are also using evidence from Core self study report for decision-making

# Process (Early Stages, After Team is Identified)



Framework to maintain focus and communication

# Process (Later Stages)



Final version of self-study report

# Developing Our Essential Guiding Research Questions



*Excerpt from shared Google Sheet*

Category	Research Question
Course offerings (C)	C1. How many classes for each Core attribute are being offered?
Faculty (F)	F1. Who is teaching the Core courses by academic unit?
Transfer Credit (T)	T1. What Core attributes are matriculated students transferring in?
Student Engagement (S)	S1. What are student perceptions of their learning related to the Core?
Assessment (A)	A1. How well do syllabus learning outcomes align with the Core attribute?

# Guiding Research Questions: Getting Organized



*Excerpt from shared Google Sheet*

<b>Category</b>	<b>Research Question</b>	<b>Data Needed</b>	<b>Data from IRP?</b>	<b>Final Desired Product</b>
Transfer Credit (T)	T1. What Core attributes are matriculated students transferring in?	Counts of matriculated students who transferred in a course that satisfied a given Core attribute, ideally with dates they were processed to be able to filter by date ranges.	Yes	Charts depicting counts of each Core attribute satisfied by a non-USD course post-matriculation

*(our initial brainstorming)*

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*(early refinements)*



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*(final product)*

# Guiding Research Questions

*Some possible research questions:*

1. What Core/GE classes are offered?
2. Who is teaching your Core/GE classes?
3. What Core/GE requirements are students fulfilling via transfer credit?
4. What is student perception of their learning in their Core/GE classes?
5. How well are syllabus learning outcomes aligning with Core/GE learning outcomes?

What are one or two guiding research questions you have about your Core/GE program that a self-study could help to answer?



Reflect

# Our Unique Core APR Template



*Walk through session handout together*

This template was developed as a result of having gone through the highly iterative process of designing and creating our Core self-study.

- ❖ It showcases the differences between the questions asked in a departmental vs a core or general education
- ❖ It highlights analyses performed to address the questions

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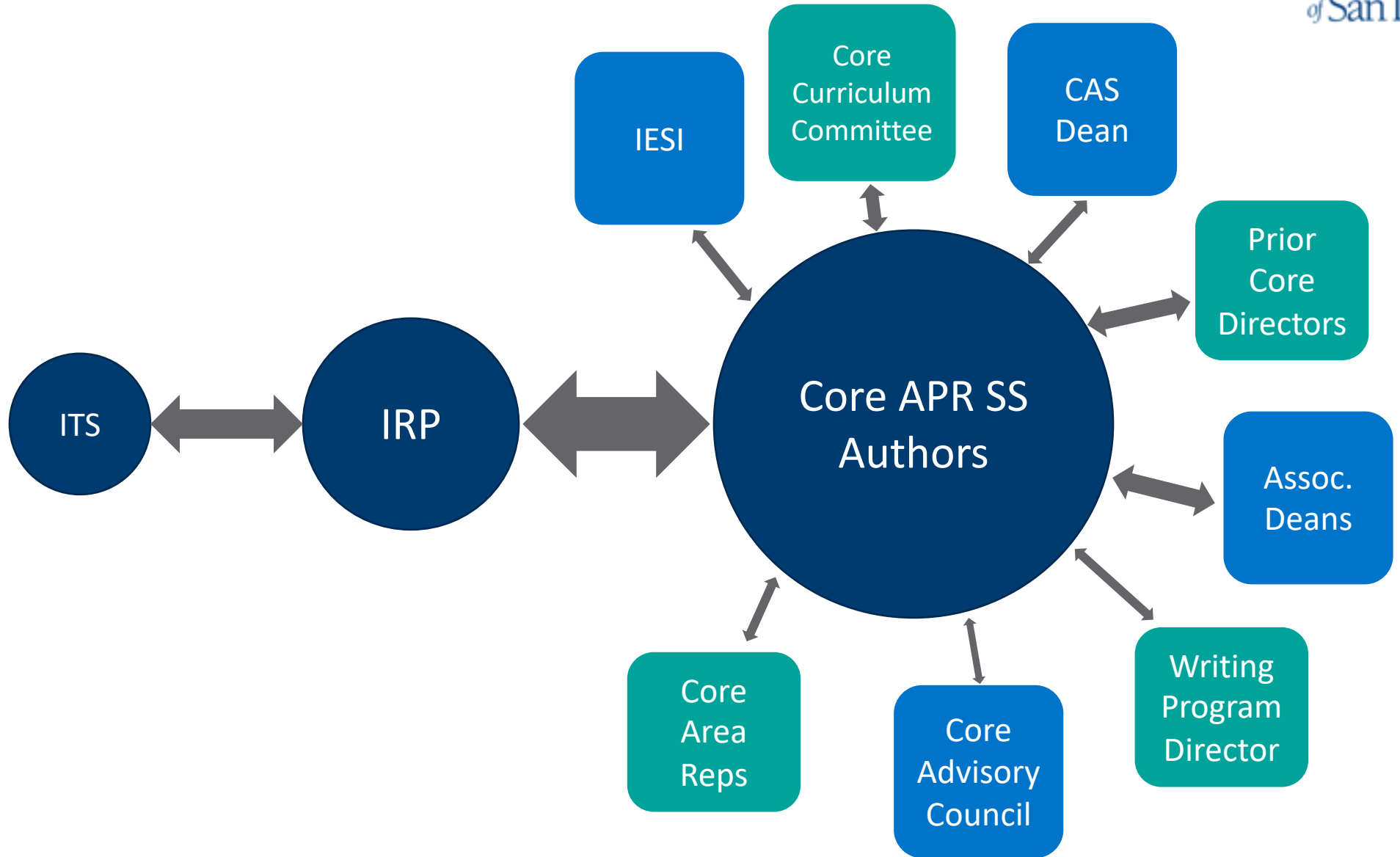
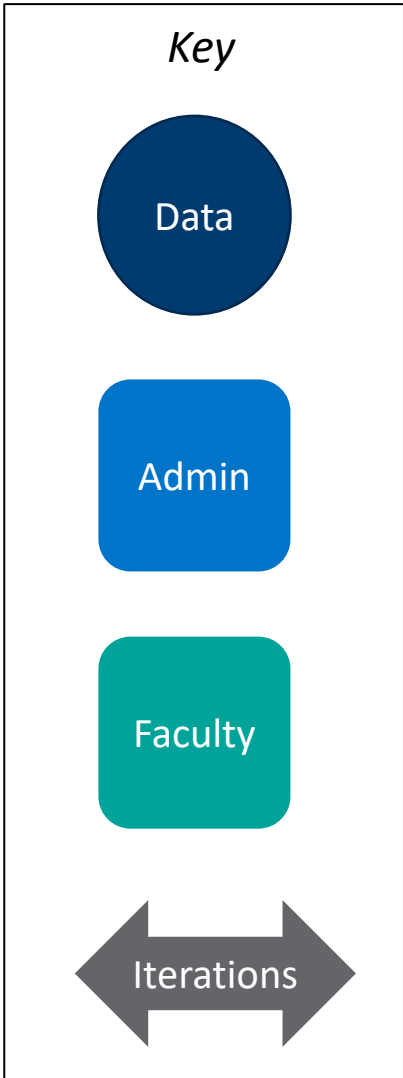


Reflect, Pair, Share



Select one or two questions and/or analyses from the template that could be useful for your institution

# Collaborations



# Collaborations

*Examples of why collaborations might be essential:*

1. Troubleshooting data
2. Developing a shared language
3. Incorporating institutional knowledge and domain expertise

Consider two collaborations you might have.

For each, select the reason(s) at the left or propose a reason of your own why the collaboration is essential.



Reflect

# Our Key Takeaways from Core Self-Study



- 1) We determined that APR was viable for the Core Curriculum and yielded valuable information to support data-driven recommendations
- 2) We created a unique template based on our research questions that effectively guided our review process
- 3) We found collaborations essential for our analyses.

# References



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# Thank you!



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Academic program review (APR) of a general education or core curriculum are rarely reported in the research literature possibly because few have considered the utility and feasibility of such an undertaking. At our institution, our Core Curriculum APR was highly effective in yielding essential guiding research questions, a unique template, and multiple analyses with complex data sets, and fostering collaborations with the director of Institutional Research and Planning (IRP). Participants will have opportunities to reflect on their GE curricula in considering how presenters' unique processes and new resources might be adapted to their own institutions.