

# Seaver Core Program Proposal

## 1. Seaver Core Program Overview

The Seaver Core Program will consist of three parts: Foundations, Connections, and Skills. The Foundations courses are common to all Seaver students and lay the framework for a Christian liberal arts education. The Connections courses represent the breadth and diversity of the liberal arts and give students the opportunity to build their own educational program within a guided framework. The Skills courses help students adjust to life in college and prepare them for their careers and lives after graduation.

1. Foundations	2. Connections	3. Skills
Speech and Rhetoric	Interpretation	Orientation
English Composition	Historical Thinking	Inclusive Leadership
Religion 1	Human Institutions & Behavior	Career Preparation
Religion 2	Creative Arts	Financial Literacy
Foundations of Reasoning & Knowledge	US Experience	Health and Fitness
Enduring Questions	Global Experience	
	Diverse Perspectives	
	Language & Culture	
	Laboratory Science	
	Mathematical Reasoning	
<b>21 Units</b>	<b>29-44 Units</b>	<b>0.5-3 Units</b>

### Foundations (21 units)

Foundations courses are meant to set students up for success in college and beyond by providing a grounding in reasoning, expression and Christianity (historical knowledge, Biblical knowledge, social impacts, personal impacts) and its application: a distinctly Christian liberal arts education.

### Foundations of Reasoning and Knowledge

The primary aim of this course is to cultivate students' skills in reasoning. A course dedicated to critical thinking speaks to what we have collectively identified as the fundamental attribute that a Seaver student should develop through our curriculum. It also supports civil discourse and democracy, which have been a part of our curriculum since our founding.<sup>1</sup> Finally, a course on reasoning serves as the cornerstone of a liberal arts education. This course will have a shared but flexible framework in order to achieve the desired learning outcomes with the participation of faculty from a wide variety of disciplines. This course will bring a cohesive structure to the first year seminar program, incorporate a significant writing component, and interface with the library to improve research skills. This course should be taken in the first semester of the student's first year.

### Enduring Questions

An integrative capstone course that builds on Foundations of Reasoning and Knowledge. The focus is applying critical inquiry and theology to the fundamental questions that humans face. This course would replace REL 301 and be owned by RELP, but would also be a class that other qualified faculty could teach. We suggest this course be taken in the third year, sequenced after Foundations of

---

<sup>1</sup> Baird, David. *Quest for Distinction*. Malibu: Pepperdine UP, 2016. P. 139.

Reasoning and Knowledge, other GE courses, and study abroad. This course speaks directly to our Christian mission and purpose by combining faith, reason and practical application.

### **Connections (29-44 units)**

These are **choice courses**. Students will take a minimum of 8 classes that fulfill the 10 categories listed below. Students can choose from a variety of disciplines so as to build their own general knowledge. Below are broad categories with unit totals and possible division representation.

Interpretation (4) - HUTE / RELP / FA  
Historical Thinking (4) - HUTE / FA / ISL  
Human Institutions and Behavior (3-4) - SOSC  
Creative Arts (3-4) - FA / HUTE  
US Experience (4) - HUTE / FA / SOSC / COM  
Global Experience (4) - HUTE / FA / SOSC / ISL / RELP  
Diverse Perspectives (3-4) - COM / FA / HUTE/ SOSC  
Language & Culture (4-12) - ISL  
Laboratory Science (4) - NASC  
Mathematical Reasoning (3-4) - NASC / SOSC / COM

Some courses may count for two categories, but students will only be able to count a course for multiple categories twice. This ensures that students take a minimum of 8 courses across the connections. Below are some possibilities for two categories that one course could fulfill.

- Creative Arts/Diverse Perspectives
- Creative Arts/Global Experience
- Creative Arts/Historical Thinking
- Creative Arts/Interpretation
- Creative Arts/US Experience
- Global Experience/Historical Thinking
- Historical Thinking/Diverse Perspectives
- Historical Thinking/US Experience
- Human Institutions/Diverse Perspectives
- Human Institutions/ US Experience
- Interpretation/Diverse Perspectives
- Interpretation/US Experience

### **Thematic Pathways**

We anticipate offering pathways in which students choose a theme (e.g. Religion and Society, Social Justice) and then take classes that satisfy requirements while also building on that theme. Pathways offer faculty an opportunity to collaborate across disciplinary lines while providing students an opportunity to pursue depth while completing core requirements. In order to provide clear guidance and structure, thematic pathways need to be formalized through the curricular review process.

### **Vetting Process**

The process for vetting which courses will count toward specific categories in the Connections section will mirror our current procedures for updating the list of General Education courses. Several categories will be simple carryovers from our current program (Global Experience, Human Institutions and Behavior, Laboratory Science, Language & Culture, Mathematical Reasoning), although programs could choose to submit additional courses for these categories. The initial list of courses that fulfill the remaining four categories (Diverse Perspectives, Historical Thinking, Interpretation, and US Experience) will be developed by faculty, programs, and divisions. This initial list of courses will be vetted by the Academic Affairs Committee (AAC) in consultation with the GERC to ensure consistency with previous procedures and the descriptions developed by the GERC. The final list will be submitted to SAC for approval. After the initial vetting period, the

process for approving new general education courses within categories will revert back to our standard process through AAC and SAC.

### Skills

Several ½ unit (6-7 week) or 1 unit courses that provide some of the content that does not necessarily constitute an entire academic class.

- A ½ unit “orientation” course can fill the gap in terms of providing first semester students an opportunity to get to know various offices and serve as a “homeroom” experience. These courses need not be taught by full time faculty.
- “Inclusive Leadership” stems from a desire to match our pursuit of inclusive excellence with our mission to develop leaders. This idea was developed in partnership with the Office of Community Belonging.

### Core Competencies

Students will continue to demonstrate writing competency through the Junior Writing Portfolio. As with our current program, four core competencies will be fulfilled by major courses.

- Writing Intensive (WI)
- Research Methods (RM)
- Presentation Skills (PS)
- Cultural Competence (CC)

A subcommittee will be formed to review courses for the CC designation. For majors that do not naturally have a CC course, students will have options to take Inclusive Leadership, an updated HUM 295: Enriching the International Experience, or a connections class that fulfills the CC learning outcomes.

### Program Comparisons

Below is a comparison of the number of courses taken overall and from each division under the current general education program and the proposed Seaver Core program.

Current GE Program 19-21 courses (63-74 units)		Seaver Core Program 14-17 courses (50-64 units)	
BUS	0 courses	BUS	0-1 course
COM	1-2 courses	COM	1-3 courses
FA	1-2 courses	FA	1-4 courses
HUTE	5-7 courses	HUTE	3-5 courses
ISL	1-5 courses	ISL	1-5 courses
NASC	1-2 courses	NASC	1-2 courses
RELP	3 courses	RELP	3-4 courses
SOSC	3-4 courses	SOSC	1-4 courses
FYS	1 course	FYS	1 course

## 2. Addressing Faculty Feedback

### Typical First Year of Classes

In the Seaver Core program, Foundations of Reasoning and Knowledge will replace the First Year Seminar. First year students will typically take one to two courses for their major each semester and

fill their schedule with Foundations and Connections courses. We recommend that students take English Composition, Speech and Rhetoric, and Religion 101 during their first year to lay the groundwork for future core classes.

Below are two possible sample schedules for first year students.

### One Major Class

1st Semester (17 units)	2nd Semester (15 units)
Foundations of Reasoning & Knowledge	COM 180
Major Class	Major Class
REL 101	REL 102
ENG 101	Language & Culture
PSYC 200	

### Two Major Classes

1st Semester (16 units)	2nd Semester (17 units)
Foundations of Reasoning & Knowledge	REL 101
Major Class 1	Major Class 1
Major Class 2	Major Class 2
COM 180	ENG 101
	SOC 200

### Compatibility with International Programs

We anticipate that students studying abroad will be required to take a language course and a culturally relevant course each semester. The local excursions and educational field trips will enhance student learning in the culturally relevant course in Creative Arts, Historical Thinking, Interpretation. Students will then have options to take Connections courses from the Interpretation, Historical Thinking, Human Institutions, Creative Arts, Global Experience, Diverse Perspectives, Laboratory Science, and Mathematical Reasoning categories, all of which are currently being taught by local faculty. IP is also an excellent opportunity to develop cultural competence (CC) through HUM 295. Depending on the expertise of the visiting faculty member, students may be able to take Religion courses or Enduring Questions. With the reduction in general education units, students may also choose to take additional culturally relevant courses to enrich their abroad experience.

A sample of options might look something like this:

3rd Semester	4th Semester
Language & Culture	Language & Culture
Historical Thinking	Interpretation
Human Institutions and Behavior	Creative Arts
Global Experience	Lab Science/Math Reasoning
HUM 295	Diverse Perspectives

On average, students enroll in 14.7 units while studying abroad during a traditional semester. Even with a reduction in course requirements and some AP credits, there are sufficient courses for students to take in their second year in order to have a full load while studying abroad. Taking general education courses is just one of the many reasons that students choose to study abroad. Our study abroad programs are a major draw for Seaver students, with over 80% of students studying

abroad while at the college. We are confident that there are sufficient courses for students to take with the new proposed plan and that they will continue to study abroad in droves.

With increased choice in the Seaver Core program, advising students who study abroad will be slightly more complex. While students will certainly have more options in general for satisfying Connections categories, what we offer in IP will dictate what students take while abroad. It will be beneficial for students to look ahead at what courses are traditionally offered in IP, perhaps even look specifically at certain programs, and plan accordingly. The GERC will work with each program location to develop an advising checklist that will help students choose the courses that best fit their needs. With the reduction in general education units, there will be less pressure on students to make sure that each course counts toward the Seaver Core program. Students may choose to take courses that immerse them in the culture of their program location. Moreover, we hope that a more flexible Seaver Core will allow for the local IP faculty to teach within their own specialities and maximize the local context.

### Great Books and Social Action and Justice Programs (SAAJ)

Currently, students who complete the four semester Great Books sequence are able to substitute these courses for five GE courses: First Year Seminar, two courses from “Group A” and two courses from “Group B.”<sup>2</sup> The Seaver Core proposal maintains this structure as detailed in the chart below.

Great Books Current Substitutions	Great Books Proposed Substitutions
FYS	Foundations of Reasoning and Knowledge
A. ENG 101	English Composition
A. ENG 380	Interpretation
A. HUM 111, 212 or 313	Historical Thinking
B. REL 301	Enduring Questions
B. COM 180	Speech and Rhetoric
B. POSC 104 or SOC 200	Human Institutions and Behavior
Optional: Asian Great Books or Selected Topics in Global Diversity	Global Experience

Similar to Great Books, this proposal maintains the substitution structure of the Social Action and Justice program. Students will also receive credit for a fifth course from either the Diverse Perspectives or U.S. Experience category because they clearly fall within the purview of the SAAJ program.

SAAJ Current Substitutions	SAAJ Proposed Substitutions
FYS	Foundations of Reasoning and Knowledge
ENG 101	English Composition
ENG 380	Interpretation
REL 301	Enduring Questions
	Diverse Perspectives or US Experience

<sup>2</sup> See pp. 108-9 in the [current catalog](#) (AY 2021-2022).

## **AP Classes**

The Seaver Core program will continue to use the current list of AP equivalent courses at <https://seaver.pepperdine.edu/academics/academic-support/advising/ap/>. The only Foundations course that a student may substitute with an AP course is English Composition. In the Connections portion of the proposed program there are some AP equivalents for Creative Arts, Historical Thinking, Human Institutions, Laboratory Science, Language & Culture, Mathematical Reasoning, US Experience. There are not AP equivalents for Diverse Perspectives, Global Experience, or Interpretation. An AP course will not be allowed to fulfill two connections categories.

## **Use of Elkins**

The Seaver Core proposal is less reliant on Elkins than the prevailing GE model. One of the benefits of the proposal is that students can opt into a variety of courses in which they have intrinsic interest. In the best circumstances, student choice will align with classes that have lower enrollment numbers by virtue of being part of a different major than the student's course of study.

Elkins will continue to be an important tool for maximizing space and personnel. First year students will likely still have an Elkins course in their first semesters of college. With the Seaver Core proposal there will be a gradual shift from classes that are taught in Elkins out of expediency because they are required general education classes to courses with high demand due to student interest or because they meet educational needs of a program or division. It is anticipated that some classes will remain in Elkins, including REL 101, PSYC 200, ECON 200, ECON 210, POSC 104.

In order to maximize the benefit of Elkins, programs and divisions with substantial student populations should make concerted efforts to develop an Elkins course or courses that satisfy learning outcomes while also opening up classroom space and alleviating faculty burden. Additionally, we can observe which classes students tend to take in the Connections categories and then consider if those classes would do well in Elkins.

The Dean's Office will support faculty and programs that wish to develop an Elkins course in many ways: maintaining double credit for teaching in Elkins, providing TAs and offering training on how to teach effectively in a large format.

## **3. Assessment: Past, Present, and Future**

The assessment of the general education curriculum at Seaver College began in Spring 2019 with the formation of the general education review committee (GERC). The committee recognized that the courses that count for the current general education curriculum are doing an excellent job of fulfilling the learning outcomes for those courses. The important assessment question for the GERC was whether those learning outcomes are serving the needs of the Seaver College students.

To that end the GERC facilitated sessions with academic divisions and cross-disciplinary forums during Fall 2019 to develop a Seaver Student Profile. The GERC then met to share the extensive feedback on the student profile and distill that information into five broad thematic categories:

- Ethical and Skilled Communication
- Intercultural Knowledge and Competency
- Creative Imagination & Critical Reasoning
- Mathematical and Scientific Reasoning
- Christian Heritage and Life

In 2020, the GERC assessed how the current general education courses contributed to this new Seaver Student Profile. The GERC also researched the general education courses at peer institutions, comparing how they address these same categories, the total number of units, and the flexibility within these programs. The details of these assessments can be found in the GERC report from December 2020 located at

<https://community.pepperdine.edu/seaver/dean/faculty-research-resources/general-education-review/>

The GERC report contains recommendations for changes to the general education curriculum. In 2021, the GERC constructed the new Seaver Core Program based on the Seaver Student Profile, recommendations in the report, and feedback from faculty about the report.

### **Alignment with the Seaver Student Profile**

Below are the categories for the Seaver Student Profile and which categories from Foundations, Connections, Skills and Core Competencies align with that profile. During the process of assessing Creative Imagination and Critical Reasoning, the GERC found it simpler to treat the two categories separately and this is reflected in the alignment of categories with the profile below.

#### Ethical and Skilled Communication:

Speech and Rhetoric  
English Composition  
Foundations of Reasoning and Knowledge  
Enduring Questions  
Interpretation  
Writing Intensive (WI)  
Presentation Skills (PS)

#### Intercultural Knowledge and Competency

Diverse Perspectives  
Global Experience  
US Experience  
Language and Culture  
Cultural Competence (CC)

#### Creative Imagination

Creative Arts  
Interpretation

#### Critical Reasoning & Information Literacy

Historical Thinking  
Interpretation  
Foundations of Reasoning and Knowledge  
Enduring Questions  
Research Methods (RM)

#### Mathematical and Scientific Reasoning

Human Institutions and Behavior  
Laboratory Science  
Mathematical Reasoning

#### Christian Heritage and Life

Religion 1  
Religion 2  
Enduring Questions

### **Comparison with Peer Schools**

The average number of general education units for our peer institutions is 40-50. The Seaver Core program has 50-64 units, which is much closer to our peer institutions than the current 63-74 unit program. On average, students at peer institutions have at least four options to fulfill their general education requirements for 81% of the units. The Seaver Core program increases the percentage of choice units to 58% from the current general education program that only has at least four options in 43% of the courses. The Seaver Core program addresses concerns from the most recent OIE report in which “Both graduating seniors and alumni report that they would prefer more flexibility in their course selections.”

## **Summary of Benefits of the Seaver Core Program**

- Flexibility in course choice and total units
  - Affords more space for students to pursue a minor, pursue an interest, do an internship, space to fulfill requirements for graduate school and professional programs.
- Deepens student engagement with the curriculum
  - Students can choose Connections courses based on their interests and approach these courses with enthusiasm for the material.
- Deepens faculty engagement with the curriculum
  - More faculty will be able to participate in the Core program by including their unique courses in the Connections, developing integrated pathways, or participating in Foundations of Reasoning and Knowledge and Enduring Questions.
- More consistency across first-year seminars
- Alignment with the Seaver Student Profile

## **7-Year Assessment Plan**

The GERC recommends a regular assessment schedule for the Seaver Core Program. In each of the first four years, one or two of the six broad categories will be assessed. Using data from these annual assessments, the GERC will assess the program in the fifth year and disseminate their findings to the Seaver faculty. During the sixth year, the GERC will use their assessment report and the resulting feedback to recommend changes to the Seaver Core Program. Those changes will be submitted to the Seaver Faculty, SAC and UAC for approval during the seventh year. This creates a formal review process by which the core curriculum is updated on a regular seven year cycle.

## **4. Implementation Plan**

- Fall 2021 - Share and gather feedback
  - Divisional presentations - Oct. 13
  - Faculty Forums - Oct. 27, Nov. 10, Nov. 16 (Zoom)
- Spring 2022 - Refine plan and seek SFA approval
  - Foundations of Reasoning and Knowledge collaboration lunch - Wednesday, March 23 / 11:30-1:30
  - Strategically using Elkins lunch - Wednesday, March 30 / 11:30-1:30
  - Submitted for SFA Approval - Wednesday, April 6
- Summer 2022 - Vetting of Connections courses
- Fall 2022 - Submission of SAC/UAC forms for approval
- Summer 2023 - Seminar for Foundations of Reasoning and Knowledge
- AY 2023-2024 - Implementation of the Seaver Core Program.
  - Pilot Foundations of Reasoning and Knowledge seminars
- Summer 2024 - Seminar for Enduring Questions
- AY 2024-2025 - Foundations of Reasoning and Knowledge replaces First Year Seminar
  - Pilot Enduring Questions
- AY 2025-2026 - Enduring Questions available for all students.



## **Appendix:** Descriptions of Connections Categories

**Interpretation (4):** A course that focuses on analyzing and interpreting artistic expression and abstract argument as well as develops a student's capacity to conceptualize shared meaning from words and experience. The cultivation of these skills fosters a more profound understanding of the irreducible diversity of human experience. Includes courses from the HUTE, FA, and RELP divisions.

**Historical Thinking (4):** A course that builds an understanding of the broad picture of human experience through time as well as how that knowledge is produced from diverse methods and sources. Focused on the behavior of people in their unique and multifaceted contexts, knowledge of the past teaches both empathy for our fellow human beings and an appreciation for complex causality. Includes courses from the HUTE, FA, and ISL divisions.

**Human Institutions and Behavior (3-4):** A course in the social sciences that helps students understand the complex relationships among individuals, institutions, ideas, markets, and historical events.

**Creative Arts (3-4):** A course that fosters an awareness of the importance of aesthetics and the arts in one's life and in society, and to instill in the student a desire for lifelong involvement with the arts. Includes courses from Fine Arts and Creative Writing.

**US Experience (4):** A course that deepens student understanding and perspective of the United States, including its economic, historic, political, social, or cultural aspects. Includes courses from the HUTE, FA, and SOSC divisions.

**Global Experience (4):** A course that offers a comparative and historical knowledge of the world by studying past and/or current cultures and societies outside of the United States and Europe. Includes courses from the ISL, FA, HUTE, RELP and SOSC divisions.

**Diverse Perspectives (3-4):** A course that focuses on the roles and contributions of minoritized and/or historically excluded groups as well as the systematic ways various groups have been stripped of power and excluded. For some students this will mean gaining knowledge about others while for others this will mean seeing themselves more appropriately reflected in courses. Includes courses from the COM, FA, HUTE, and SOSC divisions.

**Language & Culture (4-12):** A course that develops linguistic skills sufficient to discuss and compare life goals and experiences with people whose first language is not English. Includes courses from the ISL division.

**Laboratory Science (4):** A course that introduces methods used by scientists to investigate and answer questions about the natural world and how to assess the reliability and limitations of those methods. Includes courses from the NASC division.

**Mathematical Reasoning (3-4):** A course that focuses on the beauty, creativity, and pervasiveness of mathematics as well as the use of mathematical and/or statistical models. Students will build logical reasoning and problem solving skills. Includes courses from the NASC, SOSC, and COM divisions.