The Loyola Core
Mission

The Loyola Core curriculum is the cornerstone of the University’s nearly 500-year distinctive Jesuit tradition of connecting educational excellence with social justice. The mission of the Loyola Core is to educate the whole person, a central tenet of the Ignatian vision of education. 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 Loyola Core 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 Loyola Core 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 Loyola Core 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 Loyola Core 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 (e.g., Community Engaged Learning, i.e., where students apply classroom knowledge and skills in addressing real world problems, Student-Faculty Collaborative Research/Scholarship, i.e., where students work on real research or scholarly or creative projects and learn with their professors rather than from them, and opportunities for Intercultural Study or Service, i.e., where students are exposed to and learn to appreciate other perspectives and cultures) 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 allows 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.
- Loyola’s value-centered curriculum highlights Ethics and 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 values and concepts are important elements of the Loyola Core and they flow throughout the entire undergraduate experience.
- 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 and ethics 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, interdisciplinary connections, 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.