

Curriculum Committee End-of-Year Report 2025-2026

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The 2010 Curricular Renewal Working Group envisioned their 2008-2010 review as focusing on the Bryn Mawr education from 2010 to 2025, which suggested to the Curriculum Committee (CC) that a review of the undergraduate curriculum around now could be appropriate. Discussions of such a review began in 2024 and therefore intersected with the (then potential) shift to 2-2 teaching load for T and TT-track faculty and the development of the [emerging institutional priorities](#).

To inform our process of preparing for a curricular review, we considered:

- the [emerging institutional priorities](#)
- President Cadge's request that we identify curricular priorities
- the reimagining of curriculum in which departments and programs engaged prompted by the decision in Fall 2025 to shift to a 2-2 teaching load for T and TT-track faculty beginning in Fall 2026
- themes from recent alumnae conversations and a survey sent to alumnae in January of 2026 (a total of 86 responses) and
- the perspectives of campus community members gathered through a faculty survey and three open, cross-constituency conversations (see timeline starting on page 5 below).

To identify a starting point for this work for the 2025-2026 academic year, the chair of CC, a member of CAP, a member of the Provost's Office, and the President had several exchanges in the early weeks of the Fall-2025 semester focused on what distinguishes Bryn Mawr and how we might innovate to further distinguish ourselves. This group suggested that CC consider the three main phases of a student's time at Bryn Mawr College:

- (1) the first-year experience and the importance of building community and connections, exploring passions and possibilities, and developing capacity;
- (2) the pursuit of majors and minors and the deepening of capacities through studies within and across disciplines; and
- (3) the culminating senior experience.

To gain insight into the range of priorities, models, and practices departments and programs embrace in supporting students as they navigate each of these phases in the context of the emerging institutional priorities and the shift to 2-2 for T and TT-track faculty, CC sent a survey to faculty in November of 2025 (questions included below in the timeline) and invited faculty to participate in small-group discussions during the December 2025 faculty meeting (questions included below in the timeline). To ensure that faculty, staff, and students had opportunities to share their thoughts on the student experience across their time at BMC, CC held three open community conversations (see 2.11.26, 2.18.26, and 3.4.26 in timeline below).

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Drawing on all of the above and the conversations we have had amongst ourselves and with members of the campus community, we offer recommendations guided by an overarching set of considerations in the context of both challenge and opportunity. In recognition of the contributions of faculty, staff, and students to our thinking, we include in an appendix both high-level themes and all responses to the survey we sent faculty and the notes from the December faculty meeting and our community (faculty, staff, student) conversations.

Challenges and Opportunities Now and Ahead

- **The shift to a 2-2 teaching load for T and TT-line faculty** requires reconceptualization of curriculum, which departments and programs have undertaken and will continue to refine, and consideration of the time and capacity the shift in teaching load afford. (See faculty responses to the question of how the shift to 2-2 for T and TT-track faculty would afford new ways of engaging in research, mentoring, and teaching to benefit students as well as faculty in the Appendix)
- **The need to distinguish BMC among choices prospective students have** through a more integrated first-year experience, belonging to an inclusive and engaged academic community, interdisciplinarity (e.g., 360s), experiential learning, strong mentorship (peer, faculty, and staff mentoring), engagement with Philadelphia/partnerships with Career & Civic Engagement (Tri-Co Philly), new integrative minors, and expanded research opportunities.
- **The shifting nature of and expectations around evaluation**—Middle States review is a different structure than in previous years (focused on individual standards); strong focus on outcomes and how we document our outcomes; we need to show how we assess.

Conclusions, Recommendations, and Further Considerations

The conclusions, recommendations, and further considerations offered by CC aim to address the challenges and opportunities above through revising and building new structures that:

- support more integrative experiences
- afford students more choice, require more intentionality and agency, create more opportunities to support students to maximize their learning and also teach others, and
- use time reallocated by the shift to 2-2 for T and TT-track faculty

all with the goal of ensuring a more integrative experience over time and more consistent preparation of students in areas keyed to outcomes.

Below we consider each phase of a student's navigation of the curriculum, and we invite consideration across these phases: (1) a more integrative first-year experience that connects reimagined THRIVE and ESEM programs with introductory curriculum; (2) an expansion of minors, major advising, and preparation for culminating work for students during their second and third years; and (3) a clear mapping and intentional pursuit of an appropriate culminating experience.

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(1) The first-year experience and the importance of building community and connections, exploring passions and possibilities, and developing capacity

- Consider how first-year curriculum positions and prepares students to navigate their journeys through the BMC curriculum with deliberation and intention.
- Create a first-year experience (FYE) steering committee, comprised of faculty appointed by CC as well as staff and students, charged with evaluating the current elements of the FYE that the College should retain but reevaluate and strengthen (Thrive, E-Sem, etc.) and new efforts (e.g., living and learning communities) to create a first-year experience that is interconnected and integrative.
 - Establish synergy within and across first-year curriculum (e.g., Thrive, E-Sem, and departmental, first-year appropriate coursework)
 - Consider extending THRIVE to 14 full weeks and introducing .5 academic credit.
 - Work with Provost and CAP to consider resources to support a more integrated approach.
- Rethink approach to staffing ESEM
 - Commit to course replacement for departments/programs that need coverage so full-time continuing faculty can teach an ESEM
 - Consider multi-year contracts for interim ESEM instructors
 - Consider a second-semester course through which departments/programs offer division-focused courses to develop writing skills through disciplinary content (e.g., revive humanities theories course)
 - Support select GSAS students in joining the group of ESEM instructors (the [new Certificate in Pedagogy](#) is the result of collaboration among the Dean of GSAS, the director of the TLI, and the director of ESEM, and integrates select GSAS students into TLI New Faculty Pedagogy Seminar)
- Consider writing preparation more broadly beyond ESEMs
 - Link to writing-intensive and writing-attentive courses; make writing-teaching resources used in ESEM available to all faculty teaching writing-intensive and writing-attentive courses
- Develop opportunities for students to learn the hidden curriculum (knowledge about social norms and expectations and how to navigate college that is not equally available to all students) and for students to help faculty, staff, and others engage in ongoing learning.
 - Example: New, .5-credit course, “Knowing Oneself: Meaning-Making and Learning,” approved by CC and to be offered for the first time in the Fall-2026 semester, for students on second semester of academic warning in first or second year, undeclared and returning from leave, or facing disability-related challenges. To be taught by Rachel Heiser and Joanna Timmerman. Optional .5-credit follow-up independent study through the TLI to share with wider community insights and strategies of enrolled students.

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(2) The middle-years experience—pursuit of majors and minors and the deepening of capacities through studies within and across disciplines

- Revisit general curricular requirements (Approaches to Inquiry) and the understandings and capacities fostered by the Approaches. Are these still serving us? Should they be revised or reconceptualized?
- More clearly define “curricular,” “co-curricular,” and “experiential learning” in order to integrate these. This is important for faculty and staff to collaborate in conceptualizing opportunities and for educating current and prospective students about opportunities. Next steps: inventory current offerings, create shared language, and map opportunities.
- Continue forums to support faculty in major advising (major advising orientation in August for faculty beginning the next academic year as new major advisors, also open to returning major advisors).
- Strengthen connections between faculty, Student Life and Dean’s Office.
- Continue to consider writing-intensive and writing-attentive approaches earlier in the major. Inventory what is currently happening in relation to teaching writing and share that information across departments and programs.
- Expand conceptions and models of minors
 - Keep existing form of minors
 - Further develop integrative, cross-disciplinary minors built around Approaches to Inquiry or themes and in support of current (e.g., Health Studies) and emerging (e.g., Jewish Studies) areas of study
 - Create opportunities for students, with faculty support, to conceptualize and pursue integrative, cross-disciplinary minors (T and TT-track faculty can use time reallocated by shift to 2-2; CNTT and visiting faculty can request support from the TLI).
- Develop more research opportunities for students (partner with Career & Civic; summer opportunities; see section of Appendix that lists research opportunities).
- Consider ways to continue to reveal hidden curriculum, specifically regarding pathways toward graduate study and post-graduation possibilities.

(3) The culminating senior experience

- Recognize the diversity of forms that culminating experiences can take (see range of examples included in Appendix).
- Consider how to prepare students for culminating experiences
 - Look carefully at how students are prepared to write. Revisit writing-attentive and writing-intensive designations and ensure that their criteria are being met—a significant consideration for Middle States accreditation.
- Consider collaborating with Career & Civic Engagement to expand opportunities for community engaged culminating experiences (see examples included in Appendix).

In response to the positive feedback we received from students, staff, and faculty about the three, cross-constituency, open conversations we held and to engage in the necessary

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collaboration across these groups to act on the recommendations above, we will again hold open, cross-constituency conversations in the Fall-2026 semester.

Timeline of conversations Curriculum Committee had with community members

10.28.25: Nichole Reynolds (Admissions) and Alicia Walker (former member of CC and RFW):
What prospective students are looking for

11.11.25: Sent survey to department and program chairs (questions below)

- (1) In what ways will the shift to 2-2 afford faculty in your department/program new ways of engaging in research, mentoring, and teaching to benefit students as well as faculty?
- (2) In what ways does your department/program weave/integrate/combine curricular, experiential, and co-curricular components? How might your department/program continue or develop those integrations?
- (3) What research opportunities for students during the academic year, summer, and/or winter break do you offer? What different or other research opportunities could you offer? In what ways might you collaborate with LITS colleagues?
- (4) What options does your department/program offer seniors as culminating experiences (not necessarily capstones)? What ways, if any, might you revise or expand these?
- (5) How can you make visible to students (a) the learning outcomes of completing your major and (b) post-graduation or accelerated options for pursuing career interests (e.g., graduate school, [4+1 programs](#), jobs)? How can you partner with Career & Civic Engagement to clarify and communicate these?
- (6) How do and could you engage student voices in the conceptualization, revision, and planning of your curriculum?

11.18.25: David Consiglio to discuss questions to add to alum survey

12.9.25: Liv Raddatz and Ellie Esmond will join us to talk about experiential learning

12.10.25: CAP and senior administrators to discuss budget as it relates to long-term staffing and specifically funding for move to 2-2

12.10.25: Small-group discussions at faculty meeting

(1) Toward an innovative and integrated first-year experience (NB: These ideas will be explored in partnership with the Dean of Student Success and the Acting Director of The Writing Program and ESEM.)

→ What ideas do you have for designing an innovative, integrated first-year experience that includes a reconceptualized (and renamed) THRIVE program and a reconceptualized ESEM that retains its emphasis on writing?

(2) Toward expanded conceptions of minors that foreground and further integrate experiential and co-curricular experiences (NB: CC's idea here is to expand models of an existing structure [the minor] to give students and faculty greater flexibility in crafting inter- and cross-disciplinary explorations, engagement beyond the classroom (e.g., with Philadelphia), and developing in students confidence, agency, and intentionality in their work.)

→ What constellations of 6 "credits"—components linked along intellectual pathways that consist of courses, experiential learning opportunities, and/or relational leadership work—

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could you imagine inviting students (with faculty and dean support) to conceptualize, propose, and pursue? What kind of space and support structure would faculty need to conceptualize these?

(3) Toward integrated culminating experiences (not necessarily capstones) (NB: What these culminating experiences look like is up to departments/programs, as has already been affirmed; CC's goal is to gather and share ideas.)

→ What is your department/program already doing and/or what are you considering for a culminating senior experience (can, but need not, be a capstone) through which students reflect on, synthesize, and/or apply what they have learned through the major?

2.11.26: Open community conversation on first-year experience. A summary of faculty responses regarding ESEM and THRIVE gathered in December and additions by staff and students during and after the February meeting can be found in [this doc](#)

2.18.26: Open community conversation on integrating curricular, experiential, and co-curricular components. A summary of faculty responses regarding integrating curricular, experiential, and co-curricular components gathered in December and additions by staff and students during and after the February meeting can be found in [this doc](#)

3.4.26: Open community conversation on culminating experiences for seniors. A summary of faculty responses regarding culminating experiences gathered in December and additions by staff and students during and after the March meeting can be found in [this doc](#)

3.16.26: Jen Callaghan (ESEM), MB (first-year dean) and Andrew Wilbraham (THRIVE) to discuss first-year experience

4.6.26: Rachel Heiser (Academic Resources) and Joanna Timmerman (Access Services) to discuss new course for academic skills and navigation

Additional Work CC completed during the 2025-2026 Academic Year

- CC members served on relevant groups and committees
 - Rudy participated in conversation about the Dean of College, Comprehensive Campus Plan Academic Working Group, and two departmental reviews
 - Dustin served on the ad hoc 2-2 transition committee
 - David served on the Leadership Conversation Team and Comprehensive Campus Plan Academic Working Group
 - Alison served on Institutional Assessment Committee, THRIVE Working Group, and the Retention Working Group
- Clarified curricular rule for post-matriculation transfer credits. Met on 9.23.25 with Jai Abbott (student), Inés Arribas, Laurel Peterson and Ariana Hall (Members of Special Cases) and brought this proposal to the full faculty [[slide](#) with information]
- Approved revisions to majors and capstones.
- Approved “special majors” designation for courses of study offered by programs that do not have majors and for which students often propose independent majors with the goal of saving students, faculty, and special cases committee members time and energy. This work is ongoing.
- Worked with CAP as well as with faculty and student colleagues in Africana Studies on their proposal for a major.

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Appendix: High-Level Summary of Perspectives Gathered from Campus Community Members

The following is a high-level summary of all input gathered by CC through surveys sent to faculty in November 2025, small-group discussions during the December-2025 faculty meeting, and open community conversations that included faculty, staff, and student participants (and included open documents to which anyone could add thoughts if they could not attend in person). CC's goal in sharing all of these points with the entire community is to be transparent about what we gathered and so that all campus community members have access to this information. The lists below are not recommendations but rather points made by community members, some of which contradict one another. The questions addressed and included in this summary are:

1. How might the College move toward an innovative and integrated first-year experience?
2. How might the College support more interdisciplinary work?
3. How might faculty develop research opportunities during the academic year, summer, and/or winter break?
4. What options for culminating experiences (not necessarily capstones) do you want to continue and which re-imagine?
5. How can the shift to 2-2 for TT and TT-track faculty afford new ways of engaging in research, mentoring, and teaching to benefit students as well as faculty?
6. How can you make visible to students (a) the learning outcomes of completing your major and (b) post-graduation or accelerated options for pursuing career interests (e.g., graduate school, 4+1 programs, jobs)? How can you partner with Career & Civic Engagement to clarify and communicate these?
7. How do and could you engage student voices in the conceptualization, revision, and planning of your curriculum?

1. How might the College move toward an innovative and integrated first-year experience? See [this doc](#) for details.

ESEM

Thematic approach

- Living Learning Communities
- Interdisciplinary
- problem-based rather than theme-based, or some amalgamation of both?
- more intentional representation of majors
- affinity groups

Emphases

- writing and more standardized instruction
- every ESEM reads same book?

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- experiential learning or Praxis opportunities, linked to an organization or a problem, into some or all ESEMs

Staffing

- Might our graduate students teach ESEMs?
- Instead of having faculty across the College and adjuncts staff ESEMs, create a robust Writing Program and hire faculty who are trained to teach writing at the College level and whose positions are dedicated entirely to teaching ESEMs. The Writing Program could then also be tied to the Writing Center.
- Might ESEM instructors serving as first-year advisors and help students navigate instruction until they declare (see Dickinson College; Denison College).
- Advisory committee?

THRIVE

- integrate a component focused on College history
- how to develop questions as you journey through college
- how to develop capacity to communicate across differences/have difficult conversations (e.g., Better Arguments Project)— how do you ask without judgement to one another – How do we challenge them, but also give them useful life skills. Thrive is non-academic and ESEM is academic, how can it be integrated so that it feels more connected and do community building.
- include art as a focus—how it integrates with every aspect of a liberal arts education. Maybe how to engage in art as a participant—how do you listen to jazz? Watch hip-hop? Watch contemporary dance? How can you participate?
- To carry forward from THRIVE:
 - a rubric to utilize in all of our classes where one of the criteria will be on how accessible the file/project they submit is, which would connect to the training first year students already receive through the Accessibility Basics lesson we held in THRIVE

ESEM and THRIVE

- Put THRIVE and ESEM more in conversation; ESEMs sometimes overlap in teaching students certain skills (e.g. writing e-mails)

2. How might the College support more interdisciplinary work? In response to questions sent to faculty in November 2025 and from small-group discussions during December 2025 faculty meeting, faculty shared thoughts on interdisciplinary work (see [this doc](#) for details from departments and programs on each of the points below):

- 360 Program
- Praxis and Community Engagement

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- Events (e.g., student-run productions)
- Film Series: (e.g., [Counter-Narratives Film Series](#))
- Digital Scholarship (e.g., computer games; podcast: [Mawrters at the Movies](#); online textbooks; websites; Youtube Channel)
- Tri-Co Philly
- Student/Faculty collaboration/exchange
- Research projects for students
- TA training
- Conferences
- Cross-cultural exposure
- Study Abroad
- Internships
- Expanded conceptions of minors (not replacing existing minors)
 - students build own self-designed minors
 - students create a rationale around one of the APPROACHES to INQUIRY (Eg. Major plus IP, or SI) or around a THEMATIC INTEREST like experiential learning (Eg. Praxis Philly, 360 field visit, Field expedition in Geology); or policy development courses in different disciplines (Eg. Public Policy in POLS; Social Policy in SOC).
 - Policy analysis: econ, poly sci, practical dimensions to courses by partnering in Philly
 - explorations, engagement beyond the classroom (e.g., with Philadelphia), and developing in students confidence, agency, and intentionality in their work.)
 - opportunity for GSSWSR to collaborate with main campus social sciences.
 - enthusiasm from languages to capture student motivation to pair language study with partner disciplines, opportunities to apply language expertise to different career paths, perhaps through overarching schema such as “translational research”
 - Scientific literacy
 - Computational sciences
 - Build on existing interdisciplinary work (e.g., Film Studies, Health Studies)
 - maybe a special branch of 360s that are specifically designed to build these kinds of concentrations that are more enduring than typical 360s
 - Support/facilitation
 - administrative support for faculty collaboration in research/exchange that would “trickle down” to student opportunities
 - small grants to encourage meetings/speakers across departments
 - improve cross-listing instead of tagging would be useful
 - How would this be administered, and how would these cluster minors be approved?
 - What kind of space and support structure would faculty need to conceptualize these?

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3. How might faculty develop research opportunities during the academic year, summer, and/or winter break? In what ways might you collaborate with LITS colleagues? See [this doc](#) for details from departments and programs on each of the points below.

- Summer research opportunities
- Hannah Holborn Gray fellowship
- Paul Shorey Fellowship
- Summer Science Research
- Distressing Math Collective
- Lagim Tehi Tuma
- Research Assistants
- Summer Humanities Research Program
- Summer Internships
- Other research opportunities for students
- Digital scholarship projects involving students

4. What options for culminating experiences (not necessarily capstones) do you want to continue and which re-imagine? See [this doc](#) for details from departments and programs on each of the points below.

Senior Experience: A means of reflecting upon and synthesizing the main perspectives, concepts, methods of inquiry, and/or debates in the field covered by the major.

- **Senior Capstone:** one type of Senior Experience. Theses, laboratory or archival research, portfolios of work, papers, or other projects.
- **Senior Seminar:** one type of Senior Experience. Seniors meet together as a group, with faculty, and a syllabus.

Options:

- Required Senior Capstone/Thesis for All Majors
- Optional Thesis (Often Tied to Honors)
- Multiple Capstone Options (thesis, essays, portfolio, translation, etc.):
- Community-Based/Experiential/Applied Models

Staffing or Resource Constraints Affecting Capstone Design:

- Departments/Programs explicitly noting resource limitations:
 - Film Studies (no infrastructure for production courses)
 - Hebrew & Judaic Studies (no capstone due to lack of staffing)
 - Literatures in English (shift to workshop model due to FTE limits)
 - Political Science (2–2 change affecting advising rotation)

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Notes from meeting:

- Fewer departments offering a thesis than in the past
- In Physics - the experience is an accumulation of content so, to that point, the entirety of the experience is culminating.
- The idea of how to grapple with a student double majoring and completing two thesis' simultaneously.
- The key word is flexibility -
- Different departments are offering overlapping coursework (eg., methodology coursework). Is this a redundancy of resources?

5. In response to the question of how the shift to 2-2 for TT and TT-track faculty would afford new ways of engaging in research, mentoring, and teaching to benefit students as well as faculty, faculty offered the following ideas, which we have posed as questions for consideration (see [this doc](#) for full list of responses from faculty):

- How might you use additional time to advance scholarly work, including research that emerges from sustained mentoring of undergraduate thesis students, research linked to hosting conferences and other forums for sharing scholarship, and developing new courses?
- How might you use additional time to develop innovative teaching approaches through exploring and experimenting with new forms of pedagogy and piloting innovative pedagogical approaches that deepen student engagement, particularly in new interdisciplinary courses?
- How might you use additional time to continue or expand support of students enrolled in introductory courses and in senior capstone students, in mentoring, and through more independent studies, summer research opportunities, and thesis mentoring; help them apprentice towards graduate school, professional jobs, and successful personally-driven projects; alumni events ?
- How might you contribute more regularly to college-wide programs, such as 360, ESem, EALC, MECANA, INTS, ENVIS, and PHIL?
- How might you collaborate with, contribute to, and draw from other departments' offerings?
- How might you deepen students' sense of belonging, mattering, and development through community building and social events, creating opportunities for faculty and students to understand each other and to make connections across departments and experience, and/or positioning ourselves in a way that says to families: we are part of a tradition of and future for education that values above all personal engagement with learning, with faculty, community, and one another, and that regards the project of education as part of an individual's and a society's development?
- How might you expand opportunities for faculty and students to engage with a wider scholarly and educational communities that extend to (or beyond) Philadelphia?
- How can we also keep in mind, work with, and support programs and faculty who do not benefit from the shift to 2-2. Including CNTTs, programs with no standing faculty,

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adjunct/interim faculty in enacting the values and commitments of the College and the curriculum we are sustaining and further developing, and major in programs that rely on courses offered by each disciplinary department?

6. How can you make visible to students (a) the learning outcomes of completing your major and (b) post-graduation or accelerated options for pursuing career interests (e.g., graduate school, 4+1 programs, jobs)? How can you partner with Career & Civic Engagement to clarify and communicate these?

Common themes observed from departmental responses to this question are below. (See [this doc](#) for details from across departments and programs.)

- Utilizing connections to and experiences of alumnae is crucial for demonstrating to current students the impact of the major, as well as showing what post-graduation options are available.
- Major information sessions, panels, and workshops are very common methods for communicating to students learning goals, pre- and post-graduation research or internship opportunities, and longer-term career paths. Many departments note that these events are opportunities to collaborate with Career and Civic Engagement.
- Departments utilize a wide range of both traditional media and communication options, as well as newer technology methods for communication of departmental learning goals, outcomes, and alumnae stories.
- Developing connections to and programming with local/national experts or to local/national associated organizations can enhance communication of outcomes and career opportunities. These connections have or could lead to Praxis courses or internships.
- Strengthening communication and collaboration with Communications and Career and Civic Engagement is a clear need, and lack of such connections has stymied opportunities or has made information gathering and/or dissemination more difficult.
- Other ideas:
 - Russian has developed a proficiency exam as a means to quantify and more concretely indicate proficiency in the language.
 - Literatures in English has highlighted a role that C&CE can play in communicating the importance of humanities and countering anti-humanities narratives.
 - Education Studies requires majors write a rationale for the courses outside of the major they plan to take and how they cohere with Education Studies courses.

7. How do and could you engage student voices in the conceptualization, revision, and planning of your curriculum? Below is a set of themes. See [this doc](#) for details from departments and programs.

- Whole-department curricular design or redesign (e.g., create new major, redesign major, redesign major requirements)

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- Individual course design and redesign (e.g., propose focal topics, invite students to suggest readings, respond to student request for more support for preparing for job interviews, add a major requirement, co-create courses)
- Support diverse models of student engagement within courses (e.g., invite students to suggest class activities and questions aligned with course learning goals; encourage curricular leadership through practices such as: reflective journals and creative submissions that invite students to synthesize and express their experiences, perspectives, and responses to the curriculum; engage students as co-facilitators of courses)
- Out-of-class conversations (e.g., invite students to department meetings; gather ideas from students in advising sessions and senior seminar; weekly language tables; expand internships in response to student request; hold curricular planning discussions; continuing and visiting faculty participate in TLI forums)
- Assessment and evaluation (e.g., co-design rubrics and assessment criteria with students; gather midsemester and end-of-semester feedback from all enrolled students)