

The College Core

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The foundation of a TCNJ undergraduate education, the College Core ensures that students have essential knowledge and skills in areas outside their specific major. The College Core provides students with skills that employers want, helps them succeed in their TCNJ courses, teaches them how to be life-long learners, exposes them to new perspectives, and equips them to be educated citizens who can contribute to their communities.

The College Core has three, interdependent structural elements.

Structural Element I: Intellectual and Scholarly Growth

This element develops intellectual and scholarly skills to enable students to pose intellectually challenging questions, confront significant problems, and apply focused rigor in seeking promising resolutions. The element ensures that learners gain habits of mind necessary to study and understand human knowledge and how it applies to complex problems.

All first-year TCNJ students participate in the Summer Reading Program, reading a common book over the summer before their first semester. The book chosen each year explores timely issues important to students and society and connects to the year's campus-wide Intellectual Theme. On Convocation Day at the start of their first semester, students meet with a facilitator and other first-year students to discuss the book. This discussion introduces students to scholarly approaches to analyzing text sources.

All first-year TCNJ students take a First-Year Seminar (FYS) that introduces them to serious scholarship and the life of the mind and enables them to develop fundamental dispositions and abilities to engage in academic inquiry. Course sections are based on themes selected by each professor and designed to be intellectually stimulating and inclusive of students across all programs. Professors serve as mentors, assisting students in thinking about college and life. A student's First-Year Seminar cannot fulfill major requirements.

A student's ability to demonstrate a well-developed, confident identity as a good writer is accomplished through completion of three requirements: 1) the FYS, 2) a second- or third-year writing-intensive course in the major or in the College Core or a writing-enriched curriculum in the major, and 3) a capstone or other fourth-year writing-intensive course in the major. Achieving speaking proficiency is measured by a student's ability to demonstrate a well-developed, confident identity as a good speaker and is the responsibility of each major program.

The second language requirement enables students to communicate in a second language in a coherent, intelligible manner in social situations. This requirement is met when students complete the third introductory second-language course—or test out of it. Proficiency at the third-semester level in a second language is required for all programs in the School of Humanities and Social Sciences and in selected programs in the School of the Arts and Communication and the School of Business. Proficiency at either the second- or third-semester level (depending on program) is required in the School of Science. Consult an advisor for information about specific program requirements.

Information literacy is measured by a student's ability to locate, evaluate, and use information responsibly to engage in advanced study and work. It is accomplished through an on-line, non-credit course (IDS 102). Students must demonstrate this proficiency prior to graduation but are encouraged to do so as early as possible.

Structural Element II: Social Justice

This element provides students with the intellectual tools they need to think critically about structural inequalities and injustices in their local, national, and global communities and how social constructs such as race, ethnicity, gender, and sexuality perpetuate these inequalities and injustices. Students will explore how norms, values, and practices vary across different societies or regions and apply that knowledge to critically evaluate alternative worldviews. Students will engage with communities through purposeful study, action, and reflection.

The four areas of social justice are:

- Community Engagement
- Gender & Sexuality
- Global Perspectives
- Race & Ethnicity

The fulfillment of these goals is achieved by completing designated College Core courses or through an approved program or equivalent sustained experiences. Community engagement is met through First-Year Community-engaged learning (FYC) 100. No single course, program, or sustained experience may satisfy more than two of the four Social Justice categories.

Structural Element III: Multidisciplinary Perspectives

This element provides students with facility in how different disciplines discover knowledge, thereby enabling them to approach questions, issues, and problems from a variety of perspectives and with a variety of intellectual tools.

Students become proficient in six *disciplines* grouped into three *broad sectors* as follows:

- Arts and Humanities
 - Literary, Visual or Performing Arts
 - Belief Systems
- Social Sciences and History
 - Behavioral, Social or Cultural Perspectives
 - Historical Perspectives
- Natural Science and Quantitative Reasoning
 - Natural Sciences
 - Quantitative Reasoning

Courses taken for major or minor requirements may be used to fulfill the multidisciplinary perspectives as appropriate, and courses taken to meet these requirements may also fulfill Social Justice requirements, as indicated in PAWS.

There are five ways whereby students can meet the College Core Multidisciplinary Perspectives requirement:

Menu option

Students complete a total of eight courses: one course in each discipline and two additional courses from different broad sectors. First-Year Seminar sections do **not** fulfill any of the six disciplines, and therefore, do **not** fulfill any multidisciplinary requirements (although they may satisfy one Social Justice requirement). In satisfying their Natural Science requirement, students must take at least one laboratory course. When two Natural Science courses are taken, they may be in the same or different fields (unless otherwise specified by major requirements).

Interdisciplinary Concentrations

These concentrations consist of six to eight courses addressing a common theme. Courses comprising a concentration must include at least two of the three broad sectors of multidisciplinary perspectives, with no more than four courses from the same broad sector. When an interdisciplinary concentration does not include two courses from each broad sector, additional courses, as necessary, from the appropriate sectors must be completed. Every student must also complete at least one course each in quantitative reasoning and natural science with laboratory. When two additional courses are required from the same sector, students must select courses with different prefixes.

The concentrations listed below are currently available. Complete descriptions for each can be found in the section of this Bulletin for “College-Wide Programs: Interdisciplinary Concentrations” as well as on the webpage on [Interdisciplinary Concentrations](#).

- African Studies
- African Diaspora Studies
- African American Studies
- Asian Studies
- Caribbean Studies
- Classical and Early Modern British Literary Studies
- Classical Studies
- Cognitive Science
- European Literary Studies
- Health Communication
- International Political Economy
- Law and Society
- Religious Studies
- Social Justice
- Society, Ethics, and Technology

To enroll in an Interdisciplinary Concentration, consult with a faculty sponsor of the concentration, who will explain its academic focus and requirements and, with the student, determine its compatibility with the student's major program and other academic goals.

Two courses can be counted between an Interdisciplinary Concentration and a Major, and one course can be counted between an Interdisciplinary Concentration and a Minor.

Students intending to complete an interdisciplinary concentration must obtain signatures from their major advisor(s) and one of the faculty sponsors of the concentration on the [Interdisciplinary Concentration Form](#). The completed and signed form must be submitted to the Office of Records and Registration.

Double major

A double major has a first major and an optional second major. Double majors qualify students for reduced requirements for the College Core under the Broad Sectors if, between the majors, there are two or more courses from at least two of the sectors (Arts and Humanities, Social Science and History, and Natural Sciences and Quantitative Reasoning). Courses from the major(s) in the same sector may have the same prefix. If only two sectors are represented, students must then take two additional courses from the missing sector. Except for Natural Sciences and Quantitative Reasoning, where students must complete a laboratory science course and a course in quantitative reasoning whether or not the sector is included in one of the majors, it is not necessary to cover both disciplines in each sector. When additional courses in a sector not covered in one of the majors are required, each course must have a different prefix. Similarly, if a student needs only one additional course from a sector, its prefix must be different from the course taken for the major.

Dual major

Dual majors are formed when at least one program must be attached to the other to be viable. All secondary education programs and The Elementary Education, Early Childhood Education, Education of the Deaf and Hard-of-Hearing, Special Education, and Urban Education sequences fall into this category. Dual majors fulfill the College Core requirements of the first major. The liberal arts or science content discipline is considered the first major for all secondary education sequences, and students in secondary education programs must complete College Core requirements in the same manner as those in the disciplinary major alone, except that in B.S. programs, students studying a foreign language not previously taken in high school need only complete it to the 102 level. The Education major is considered the first major for Elementary Education, Early Childhood Education, Education of the Deaf and Hard-of-Hearing, Special Education, and Urban Education sequences. College Core requirements for these Education programs follow those outlined above for double majors, and, except for programs attached to Spanish, do not include a foreign language.

Some education majors must take specific College Core courses that are required by state licensure requirements. Please consult your major advisor for guidance on your College Core requirements.

Self-designed major or interdisciplinary concentration

Students can create their own majors or interdisciplinary concentrations. If the self-designed major is the student's only major, then the College Core requirements follow those of the Menu option; if the self-designed major is a student's second major, then the College Core requirements follow those of the Double major option.

Self-designed interdisciplinary concentrations follow the College Core requirements of the Interdisciplinary Concentration option.

To self-design a major, a student must secure the sponsorship of at least one faculty member as an advisor. The student must then submit a formal proposal and plan of studies to the Self-Designed Major Coordinator, Dr. Richard Kamber, at rkamber@tcnj.edu, who will meet with the student to work out the details of the proposal. For further information on self-designed majors, see the section of this Bulletin titled "Self-Designed Major."

To self-design an interdisciplinary concentration, a student must secure the sponsorship of at least two faculty members who teach in disciplines included in the proposed concentration. The student must then complete the [Interdisciplinary Concentration Form](#) and submit it to the Office of Records and Registration.