

**Woodrow Wilson School DEI Core Requirement Pilot
Overview and FAQs, last revised February 17, 2020**

Summary

1. A DEI Core Requirement “pilot study” was proposed in Spring 2019 by the WWS DEI Standing Committee (comprised of faculty, student, and administration representatives)
2. Current proposal: half-term course requirement where students in the pilot select from a pre-approved list of classes focusing on DEI issues
3. Similar to all other WWS required curriculum, the DEI pilot would NOT assert particular ideologies/viewpoints. Instead, they would provide frameworks to help students better anticipate and assess how different identities are impacted by policy
4. Would not apply to any current students -- pilot requirements would only apply to MPA and MPP students entering in Fall 2020 for 2-3 academic years until the next formal Masters Program review
5. Before the pilot would be implemented, it would need to be approved by the faculty and Dean Rouse. We are seeking student feedback in advance of these decisions, including suggestions on how the pilot may be best implemented.

For additional questions or concerns, please feel free to reach out to any of the following students heading outreach efforts to receive input from WWS students:

Lead Organizers: Danielle Beavers, Mark Lee (MPA1 DEI Reps)

WWAC Co-Chairs: Nathan Babb, Iona Main, Artin Haghshenas, Fionnuala Seiferth

WWAC Curriculum Reps: Wendy Gomez, Kaitlin Roh, Emily Apple, Natalie Kotkin

Additional DEI Reps: Philmon Haile, Harshita Rallabhandi, Yvette Ramirez, Sagatom Saha, Rocio Rodarte, Anh Ton

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Detailed Overview

What is the proposed DEI core requirement and how was it created?

In Spring 2019, the WWS DEI Standing Committee (comprised of faculty, student, and administration representatives) recommended to Dean Rouse to launch a pilot experiment to institute a half-term course requirement that focuses on diversity, equity and inclusion. This proposal was a response to student advocacy over the past few years that WWS add a core course requirement that addresses race, gender and ethnicity, in addition to efforts to incorporate these important policy dimensions into the existing core curriculum.

What would the pilot requirement entail?

Under the existing proposal, beginning with next year's incoming MPA and MPP classes, students would be required to take one half-term course from a pre-approved list. Staff have already identified a number of courses that would fulfill this requirement, including:

- WWS 527d: Bridging Divides Prof. Nealin Parker
- WWS 531: Identity, Power and Policy Prof. Keith Wailoo
- WWS 565: Social Determinants of Health Prof. Sanyu Mojola
- WWS 571b: Gender in the World Economy Prof. Alicia Adsera
- WWS 593h: Policymaking in Diverse Societies Prof. Rafaela M. Dancygier
- WWS 594i: Racial Democracy in America Prof. Nyron Crawford
- WWS 594o: Women and Politics Prof. Lauren Wright

Note that these are just a sample of courses under WWS offerings and by no means a complete or finalized list. The administration has yet to define criteria for how a course might fall under these requirements (e.g., “material must focus primarily on policy analysis with respect to identity groups and power”).

Would students be limited to fulfilling the requirements with these listed classes?

The approval procedures for these classes are still under deliberation. However, we anticipate that there are several 500-level or 400-level courses in other departments (e.g., African American Studies, Politics and Sociology) that would meet this criteria, if those faculty are willing to accept WWS masters students. There are potentially other ways students could fulfill the criteria (e.g., writing a DEI-focused final paper for another WWS class), and we are also open to receiving student and faculty suggestions on this. *Note that there is a potential for Field IV requirements to “double count” with this new requirement, provided that the course taken is taught by an economist.*

What will the decision making process look like?

The ultimate decision will be made by Faculty Council by March 15th. A coalition of students (WWAC Co-Chairs, DEI, LGBTQ, and Curriculum Representatives) is working with faculty and staff to ensure students' feedback is centered and prioritized. This will entail an in-person town hall, anonymous survey, and culminate in a public report to document our shared experience. Students are welcome at any time to approach any of the students reps, including during weekly DEI office hours, to provide one-on-one feedback.

Logistics/Implementation

Why a pilot and not a permanent change?

The rationale for the pilot is two-fold. It would provide an opportunity: 1. to expand the number of relevant course offerings, and 2. to collect feedback over the next two academic years 2020-21/2021-22 from students, alumni and faculty that could be incorporated into the next formal review of the MPA program, most likely to be conducted in 2022-23. In the past, WWS has not changed core course requirements outside of a major program review; hence, the proposal for the pilot until the next review period. At that time, permanent changes can be considered more fully, with more information on student and faculty needs or preferences.

How would this impact current students?

The pilot requirements would only apply starting with incoming masters students next fall (Fall 2020) through the duration of the pilot (2-3 years, until the next program review). However, while current students will not be directly impacted, they may benefit from the addition of new DEI-focused courses.

Why an elective (or “distributive”) requirement rather than a single DEI core class?

There are many reasons to support either a unified core class for all students versus a menu of courses from which students can choose. However, an elective requirement also allows students to select topics and professors who specialize in DEI in their field and area(s) of interest. As the proposal stands, this would be the most flexible and customizable requirement in the MPA/MPP curriculum.

Moreover, creating a single, unified core class would likely take several years to implement (including the appointment of faculty and finalization of curriculum), whereas the elective requirement allows us to use existing classes to test in a pilot. Student and faculty experiences over the next few years will allow WWS to determine how to permanently implement a DEI requirement, whether as a single course, a set of electives, or not at all.

Will there be enough courses in every field that would fulfill the DEI Core requirement?

Beyond the courses listed above, it is anticipated that new courses will be offered to ensure students can meet this requirement. The classes of students in the pilot will not be eligible to take electives until Spring or Fall 2021 semesters, allowing ample time to create, adjust, or revive courses to meet the requirements.

Additional Questions

How is this relevant to every MPA student, including those who are not specializing in DEI? Doesn't this requirement impose politically leftist or progressive ideology?

Just like frameworks relating to economics, psychology, sociology, political theory, and statistics, DEI is a core skill set and established discipline that can be applied to policy making across all fields. Regardless of political ideology or alignment, all policy students benefit from learning and understanding how policies have differential impacts on different populations or communities. The knowledge of analytical frameworks and historical contexts equips future policy makers to develop policies with the greatest impact, regardless of their political interests.

How do you know future classes will want this requirement?

Over the past 5 to 6 years, students have consistently advocated for expanded DEI curriculum and the addition of a core DEI academic requirement, both through WWAC and other student organizing. Other policy schools are increasingly exploring similar initiatives, and masters programs in several related fields (e.g., social welfare, public health, etc.) already require such coursework for their graduates. In addition to ongoing outreach with students, this pilot requirement will allow the administration and student representatives to evaluate the efficacy of initiative and make adjustments as needed during the next formal Masters program review.