Key points and ideas that emerged from table discussion (bulleted list of 5-10 points with a couple sentences of description for each):

- **Ineffectiveness of / problems with current system**
  - 15-20 years later, it is an outdated curriculum - it limits intellectual value, is too bureaucratic, is too complicated, and limits students’ choices.
  - It is an imitation of a liberal arts college, which is not what our university is - many big, highly ranked universities have a broader distribution model.
  - The courses it produces are a broad, introductory overview of a subject, which works well for some like astronomy, but not others like literature.
  - Empowers faculty committees to make decisions about what can and should be taught in courses, instead of the actual faculty who will be teaching those courses.
  - Too many restrictions on courses - as a curricular model, it is similar to something you would see at an engineering college or a music conservatory - just reproducing specific courses. It is the opposite of liberalizing education.
  - While some students approach LEs thoughtfully, many view it as just checking boxes and take courses based on their convenience, not what makes sense in their academic career.

- **“Wouldn’t it be great -ism”**
  - A way to describe ideas that focus on too many ideals.
  - “Wouldn’t it be great if every graduate of the U of M knew how to program a computer, how to play an instrument, how to speak another language, how to do standard deviation.”
  - Current curriculum is an example of “wouldn’t it be great -isms,” attempts to make students experts in many fields.

- **Alternative should be broad, but not too broad**
  - We were talking about implementing a model more in the direction of complete freedom, but we do need to ensure students receive some diversity in their education.
  - What is our responsibility to undergraduates to ensure diversity in their course selection?

- **Cores vs. Themes**
  - The cores and themes are trying to achieve different goals.
  - Disciplines, ethics, and writing are all separate, and need to be approached in different ways.
  - This results in various solutions to each different problem.

- **Solution for Cores**
  - Have students choose from all courses to take three in the humanities, three in the
sciences, and three in the social sciences.

○ Every course would automatically count for a requirement depending on which department it is in - each department is put into one category they will count towards (econ is social science, physics is the hard sciences, etc).

○ Leave the writing requirement to departments - each can decide if writing intensive courses will need to be part of their curriculum.

● Delegation
  ○ The University requirements should be very bare-bones.
  ○ Then each college can have more specific requirements that are relevant to what their students need to be learning.
  ○ Each department can specify further.

● Competition
  ○ There is less likely to be competition and “gamesmanship” between departments/courses if every course counts for some requirement.

Summary of discussion (300 to 500 words):

The discussion at our table started out passionately and never lost steam. We began by addressing some of the main concerns we have with the current LE curriculum, and quickly came to the conclusion that it should be abandoned completely. There are many problems we saw in the current system, and believe a lot of them could be addressed by simplifying the entire curriculum. We feel that as a large institution, it is not realistic to continue having the specific requirements that we do for all students. In order to give them more academic freedom and eliminate many bureaucratic struggles, the system should be simplified. We discussed the concept of “wouldn’t it be great -isms” and the idea that as a large university, we are trying to do too much with the current LE requirements. A simplified solution could look something like what we came up with. We would change the current seven core requirements to three broad ones, perhaps divided into social sciences, scientific inquiry/ hard sciences, and humanities. Students would take three classes from each category, and their major will fall into one of the three categories. Every department will automatically count towards one category, eliminating the possibility of “double dipping” for a course, but ultimately giving students many more options in their LE courses. The theme and writing components of the university-wide LE curriculum will be eliminated. Instead, departments will be able to add those requirements in addition to the cores in a way that makes sense for their program. Graduates from other colleges,
such as Carleton, have an identity associated with them because of that college. Minnesota is too large and too broad to have a “brand” like smaller liberal arts colleges do. It’s not our niche, and instead we need to allow departments to create their own “brand.” Overall, we believe a simplified system such as this makes much more sense for a university of our size.

Additional context (characterize level of consensus/lack of consensus, tone and tenor of conversation, other notable aspects of the discussion):

There was a fairly strong and passionate consensus throughout our discussion regarding the current system’s inadequacy. We noted many problems we’ve encountered, and articulated the need to completely abandon the current LE requirements. There was a fairly frustrated tone throughout the conversation, as well as a strong desire to get started making changes. We developed an initial idea of what a new LE curriculum could look like, and were excited to think about what those simplified requirements would look like and mean for future students. There was a lot of passion for improving students’ education, and hope that ideas like some of ours can be implemented in the near future.