

News From the Core

December 2025

Core Happenings: 2025 Ignite Award Winners



The University Core's third annual Ignite Instructor of the Year Awards ceremony was held on December 2nd at the Cupples House. This award recognizes two outstanding Ignite instructors, nominated and chosen by their students. This year we received 49 separate first-year student nominations, singling out 24 individual faculty members who taught Ignite in either Spring 2025 or Fall 2025. Our 2025 winners, selected by our team of eight [Undergraduate Core Fellows](#), are Dr. Carolyn O'Laughlin (Spring 2025) and Dr. Amanda Barton (Fall 2025). Four outstanding instructors were also selected as finalists: Drs. Jesse Helton, Bobby Wassel, Kerry Wilson, and Ajlina Karamehic Muratovic.

In their nominations, students spoke to the transformative impact these faculty members have had on their sense of purpose and belonging here at SLU. Students also highlighted how they have been able to connect learning from their Ignite Seminars to other SLU coursework and to communities beyond the University. The Core thanks our winners and finalists for teaching such impactful Ignite Seminars and for guiding our first year SLU students as they begin their intellectual journey with us. Congratulations to our winners and finalists!

Open Call for New Associate Directors

The University Core is pleased to invite interested faculty and staff members to apply to serve as Associate Directors of the Core effective July 1, 2026. The five Associate Director positions open for applications are: Open Seminars; Cura Personalis and Reflection in Action; Ultimate Questions; Eloquentia Perfecta: Equity and Global Identities. Associate Directors serve three-year terms and are compensated with one course release or equivalent and a stipend for summer work. Position Descriptions and eligibility guidelines [are available here](#); the application deadline is January 19, 2026.

SLU's Core is overseen by a team of six Associate Directors, each in charge of leading the vision and development of their distinct Core area. Associate Directors serve three-year terms that are renewable once. The Core's first team of Associate Directors was appointed in July 2020, immediately after the university-wide ratification of our new common Core curriculum. Over the past

six years and in collaboration with the Director and Assistant Director of the Core and the UUCC, this inaugural team has carefully and successfully led the vision for and development of their unique Core areas. You can learn more about the [Core's current leadership structure here](#).

For this new application cycle, the Core has reimagined and combined two Associate Director positions. The Associate Director: Open Seminars position guides synthetic vision for and oversight of SLU's Ignite Seminar and Collaborative Inquiry requirements; and the Associate Director: Eloquentia Perfecta position guides synthetic vision for and oversight of the four interconnected areas of SLU's Eloquentia Perfecta sequence (Written Communication, Visual Communication, Oral Communication, and Creative Expression). The three remaining open positions remain as originally configured in 2020.

For queries or clarifications, please contact Dr. Ellen Crowell, Director of the University Core at ellen.crowell@slu.edu

In the Core Classroom: Poetry Across Four Years



Dr. Ellen Crowell's Ignite Seminar "Reasons For Poetry" has now run for four years, from 2022-23 through 2025-26. This December, she invited students from prior semesters to join her current students in launching the fourth Reasons for Poetry anthology. At this event, students from all four years gathered to share the anthologies they created for their own classes and to revisit one poem--Ada Limon's "The Leash"--shared across all four years.

Although Dr. Crowell has taught first-year students for many years, she found that Ignite invited her to teach differently. She said, "Ignite makes sharing the whole point. Professors are encouraged to talk about how, as young people, they began to cultivate the intellectual passions that became the scaffolding for their whole lives." Just as poetry has always provided her "the structures, furniture, and vessels" to wrestle with complex emotions and life questions, Dr. Crowell designed her Ignite to show students that, regardless of prior experiences with poetry, good or bad, poems can accompany us as we experience and are changed by the complexities of our own lives.

At the end of each semester, Dr. Crowell asks students to identify poems that are "as complex as they are," and these poems become that semester's anthology. Year after year, these anthologies collect poems that are "raw, open, mysterious, earnest, strange, and infinitely complex"—much like the students who chose them. This Reasons For Poetry reunion served as a testament to how Ignite facilitates deep connections between students and faculty across semesters and to the power of poetry to illuminate shared human experience.

Archaeology Around Us



"Archaeology Among Us," taught by Dr. Carolina Aznar at SLU-Madrid, is an Ignite Seminar designed to introduce students to archaeology as a tool for understanding both the communities they come from and the cultures they encounter while studying in Spain. Many students at SLU-Madrid travel across Europe and to North Africa on weekends and holidays, so becoming aware of archaeological evidence in the places they visit fosters a deeper cultural and historical understanding of these spaces as they travel.

Dr. Aznar's Ignite begins with an introduction to the Jesuit tradition and Ignatian Pedagogical Paradigm, which invites students to consider who they are as individuals in a community of learners in Madrid. From here, students study the history of archaeology and archeological evidence left by past societies. The class then embarks on an archeological tour of ancient Madrid, visiting sites such as a subway station, an underground parking lot, an open-air park, and the basement of a restaurant. The tour ends with a visit to a museum devoted to the archaeological history of the city of Madrid. Aznar's course invites students to personally connect to the course content through reflection on an archeological site in their home communities and then, later in the term, to select an archeological site they plan to visit while in Madrid, which becomes the subject of their research analysis paper.

Dr. Aznar has enjoyed teaching her Ignite Seminar for the first time this semester because, as she notes, "On the one hand, I am teaching something I am passionate about, and on the other hand, many students in my course are finding archaeology as fascinating of a way to understand themselves and the world as I do. And I'm learning a lot from their perspectives."

Interested in Teaching Ignite?

Thank You and Happy Holidays!



In this season of reflection and celebration, we would like to take a moment to thank all members of the University community who support the Core in big and small ways. Collectively, we ensure that all SLU undergraduates are folded into a dynamic, student-centered Jesuit education. We are deeply thankful for you, and we could not do this without you. Happy holidays, and we look forward to seeing you in 2026!

Upcoming Events and Deadlines

January 13

Priority deadline for new Ignite Seminar proposals for AY26-27, [Ignite Proposal link here](#)

January 19

Ignite [Teaching Preferences form](#) due for instructors planning to teach in AY26-27

January 27

Core Brown Bag, 12:00 - 1:00 pm
Verhaegen Hall, Room 219

February 24

Core Coffee, 8:30 - 9:30 am
Verhaegen Hall, Room 219

[Full List of Core Events](#)

Questions? Email core@slu.edu

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