The Core Curriculum: A Focus on 21st Century Competencies

Presented by the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board, the Texas Association of Community Colleges, and STARLINK, with funding through a Perkins Leadership Grant
April 11th, 10:00-11:30 am

1. Why is the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB) changing the core curriculum?
   a. Undergraduate Education Advisory Committee (UEAC) Report: the core curriculum needs to reflect current and future demands of students at the college level and in the workplace.
   b. Change from belief of core as "basics" or just needed courses to a set of essential college level skills and knowledge to be learned in a variety of disciplines
   c. Need to align with the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACS-COC) Principles, CR 2.7.3 and CS 3.5.1
2. The New Core
   a. Purpose: "Through the core curriculum, students will gain a foundation of knowledge of human cultures and the physical and natural world; develop principles of personal and social responsibility for living in a diverse world, and advance intellectual and practical skills that are essential for all learning" (THECB, 2011)
   b. Six Core Objectives
      i. Critical Thinking: Creative thinking, innovation, inquiry, analysis, evaluation, and synthesis of information.
      ii. Communication skills: Effective oral, written, and visual communication.
      iii. Empirical and Quantitative Skills: Manipulation and analysis of numerical data or observable facts resulting in informed conclusions.
      iv. Teamwork: Ability to consider different points of view and to work effectively with others to support a shared purpose or goal.
      v. Social Responsibility: Intercultural competency, knowledge of civic responsibility, ability to engage effectively in regional, national, and global communities.
      vi. Personal Responsibility: Ability to connect choices, actions, and consequences to ethical decision-making.
   c. Eight Foundational Component Areas
      i. Communication
      ii. Mathematics

      iii. Life and Physical Sciences

      iv. Language, Philosophy, & Culture

      v. Creative Arts

      vi. American History

      vii. Government/Political Science

      viii. Social/Behavioral Science

        (Note: Each component area has a specific definition, explanation of course involvement, and core objectives addressed)

  d. Proposed Rule Changes

    i. Component Area Option (CAO)

      1. Potential other option (replaces "Wildcard" option) for students and universities.

      2. Must meet one or more foundational component areas, along with its applicable core objectives.

      3. Minimum of three core objectives met; all must have communication and critical thinking included plus one other.

    ii. No more unique need courses allowed.

    iii. All schools will follow a strict 42 hour core, with the one exception of transfer articulation agreements.

3. Timeline/Important Dates

  a. November 30, 2013: Proposed curricula due to THECB staff

  b. February 1, 2014: THECB staff approvals completed

  c. Fall 2014: Statewide implementation

(Note: forms/procedure information to follow)

  d. Sample Timelines for universities and colleges:

    i. Spring 2012: Develop process for creating new core (stress faculty involvement)

    ii. Fall 2012: Course submission, review, and revision

    iii. Spring 2013: Final course submissions

    iv. Summer and Fall 2013: Chief Academic Officer/Chief Instructional Officer send courses approved by institution/faculty to THECB

4. Assessment

  a. Not assessing the ACGM or course-based assessment but rather the core objectives

  b. To assess: discover, document, and seek to improve the student attainment of the core objectives

  c. Every 10 years (2 years prior to SACS-COC reaffirmation year) institutions electronically submit assessment report to THECB

    d. Institutions use direct measures, indirect measures, and externally informed measures to systematically collect, review, and use the evidence to improve student learning; institutions may choose their own methodologies but must have at least one direct measure for each core objective

5. Development and Implementation
    a. Faculty should have the responsibility to develop the new curriculum and ensure that all courses selected meet the foundational component area criteria.
    b. Each institution has the flexibility to determine the process and procedure.
    c. What institutions must report:
        i. Describe process to ensure compliance with THECB rules and state statutes.
        ii. List of courses for each foundational component area.
        iii. List of any courses to fulfill CAO option, prove compliance with rules.
        iv. Assurances that each course includes content and learning activities that allows students to achieve an institutionally-designated level of attainment for the core objectives required (Note: each institution determines each level of attainment; specific and targeted for all students).

6. Questions/Answers
    a. In science courses, how to best address communication and teamwork that is acceptable?
        i. Needs to be a shift in how we teach; project based learning instead of lab and lecture only
    b. Why in newly revised core curriculum is critical thinking, reasoning, and logic now remedial when it used to its own course?
        i. Those skills are highly desired so it is important for students not to receive them in just one course but for the skills to be infused into various courses and disciplines.
    c. If most science courses are 4 hours, how do we meet the 6 hours needed?
        i. This is posted in the FAQ section on the website (link provided at end of document); 4 hours can be in life sciences and 2 hours can be CAO or part of the major requirement as long as it's not over the 120 hour requirement.
    d. Are we able to submit early to allow for catalogs to be printed?
        i. The THECB has designated November 30th-Februrary 1st and does not intend to receive early submissions; gave plenty of time to allow for planning and time to get faculty involvement.
    e. What about computer literacy?

       i.   Computer and information literacy was debated about being included; we tried to balance what students need to know and what students already know; computer literacy is often included in courses and major courses; can be included as a CAO course if the institution prefers.

   f.   So the THECB does not care if we assess art in an art class or chemistry in a chemistry course?

       i.   Other entities already require enough about content learning; let's worry about other means for student success in workplace and continuing education

   g.   Please give specific example of direct major for political science for social and personal responsibility.

       i.   For social responsibility, assess civic engagement of students in short answers; not about individual classes but the core as a whole; think beyond current practices and vehicles of learning

Website:
www.thecb.state.tx.us/corecurriculum2014

Webinar Video/Slideshows Are Available for Download at:
http://www.starlinktraining.org/

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