

TEXAS HIGHER EDUCATION COORDINATING BOARD
Academic Quality and Workforce

Undergraduate Education Advisory Committee

September 21, 2018

Summary Notes

Members present: Larry Abraham, Stefanie Borst, Daniel Brown, Edward Byerly, Hope Cory, Elizabeth Garcia, Frank Graves, Homer Guevara, Heather Hicks, Elizabeth Howard, Marilyn Kaplan, Teri Longacre, Richard Miller (Co-Chair), Julie Penley (Co-Chair), John Quintanilla, José Rojas, Christal Seahorn (via phone), Kristin Spizzirri (via phone), Janet Tareilo, Monica Villarreal, Kevin Wood

Members absent: Janna Chancey, Elva LeBlanc

Visitors: Rissa McGuire (Council of Public University Presidents and Chancellors), Jennifer Morgan (UT-Austin)

Coordinating Board staff: Reinold Cornelius, Assistant Director, Allen Michie, Program Director, Rex Peebles, Assistant Commissioner, Melinda Valdez, Program Director

1. Call to Order and Welcome

The meeting was called to order by Co-Chair Julie Penley at 10 a.m., followed by member introductions.

2. Orientation for the Work of the UEAC

Coordinating Board staff provided an overview on how the UEAC operates, including logistics, proceedings, and committee operations.

3. Election of Committee Co-Chairs

Following Dr. Penley's explanation of the options for electing committee co-chairs, the committee agreed to keep terms of co-chairs staggered, if possible, and elect each new co-chair half a year before a new chair would take over. Members wished to maintain tradition that one co-chair would come from a two-year institution and the other from a four-year institution. Members wished to keep the current co-chairs, elected September 2017, for the current meeting, in keeping with a traditional two-year term.

After Dr. Miller, the co-chair representing four-year institutions, explained his intention to conclude his time as co-chair, Larry Abraham motioned to elect Dr. Miller's replacement as chair from a four-year institution for the April 2019 meeting, Daniel Brown seconded, and all members agreed. An amendment to the motion by Dr. Miller included the provision that the Committee would elect the co-chair from a two-year institution next April, for a turn starting in September. Dr. Miller then nominated Dr. Brown for co-chair starting April 2019, Edward Byerly seconded, and, after discussion, Dr. Brown accepted.

The UEAC members unanimously voted to 1) elect each new co-chair half a year prior to beginning their new term; 2) remain with selecting one co-chair from a two-year institution, and one co-chair from a four-year institution; 3) elect Daniel Brown as the four-year institution co-chair representative, for an April 2019 beginning term, and 4) elect the two-year co-chair representative at the April 2019 meeting, for a September 2019 beginning term.

4. Consideration of Summary Notes From the April 20, 2018 Meeting

José Rojas made a motion to accept the summary notes from the 2018 April meeting, seconded by Elizabeth Howard, with a unanimous vote to accept.

5. Consideration of Potential Changes to The Texas Core Curriculum (TCC)

Reinold Cornelius explained Committee work starting with UEAC workgroup ideas (February 2018) for changes to the TCC. One idea pertained to the structure of the Component Area Option (CAO), in response to the problem of how certain courses, such as introductory language courses, do or do not align with the TCC. In April the Committee recommended to allow such courses in Option B of the CAO, if an institution defines one or more special interest areas. This change would also allow up to six Semester Credit Hours (SCH) in Option B, making it possible for students to take a course sequence of special interest area courses. Courses that can be approved in a Foundational Component Area (FCA) would still be appropriate for Option A of the CAO.

Dr. Cornelius reported on the idea favored by some institutions to reduce the SCH requirement for the TCC from 42 to 36 SCH, through the elimination of the CAO. He asked for input and thoughts about this idea.

The other idea from the workgroup meeting was in reference to the general education requirement for the TCC, which implies the question of what course levels are permitted in the TCC. The workgroup suggested allowing only lower-division courses into the FCAs, but to continue allowing upper-division courses in the CAO. Coordinating Board staff's response was to change the policy by not allowing upper division courses in either the FCAs or the CAO.

At the April meeting UEAC members asked for a list of upper-division courses approved in the TCC. Staff provided the list, and included a list of lower-division courses approved at four-year institutions that have a Texas Common Course Numbering System (TCCNS) equivalency, and a list of courses that do not have a TCCNS equivalency.

In April, UEAC members also asked staff to seek advice from the Coordinating Board's legal counsel on how to interpret the statute. Counsel explained that Texas Education Code (TEC) clearly tied TCC courses to the Texas Common Course Numbering System (TCCNS), which was referred to as common course numbering system (TEC 61.822). Counsel also referred to TEC 61.832, which requires four-year institutions to declare TCCNS equivalencies. Institutions do so in their course inventories. TCCNS equivalencies are tied to the Academic Course Guide Manual (ACGM), which is the list of courses approved by the ACGM Committee.

After the staff introduction of the topics of discussion, members deliberated in-depth about benefits and disadvantages of reducing the TCC from 42 SCH to 36 SCH, if the Component Area Option were eliminated. The Committee decided scheduling a separate meeting dedicated to this issue in January of 2019, based on timing for the upcoming legislative session. Prior to the next meeting, staff will summarize the discussion of the TCC and proposed changes raised at the last meeting.

The Committee discussed the issue of upper-division courses in the TCC. Staff made a new recommendation that would allow only ACGM courses in the Texas Core Curriculum, based on Counsel's clarification.

Dr. Abraham asked if there are data to show that the presence of lower-division courses without TCCNS alignment, and/or upper-division courses in the TCC, impede student transferability or cause excess hours. Dr. Abraham said his institution's set-up was not to impede any students bringing courses in through transfer. Native freshmen have flexibility through upper-division courses, but upper-division courses do not affect transferability. It is not required that upper-division courses are to be taken in the core. Upper-division courses are an opportunity to take a special course, maybe with a smaller class size, delivered by distinguished faculty, or if taken in a student's junior or senior year. He said that prescriptive majors may require junior or senior students to take core courses in their senior year, because the major required all the courses during freshman and sophomore years; those students should not be forced to take a lower-division course. He added that his institution requires 54 SCH of upper-division courses and students could decrease time to degree by taking them in fulfillment of the TCC as well. Several members agreed with some or all of these points.

The Committee discussed information from the raised issue of honors courses by Drs. Brown and Quintanilla. Honors courses could be specifically designed to address all requirements of the TCC, but they would be precluded from receiving an equivalency in the TCCNS.

Dr. Penley asked how to align the language of rules and statute without doing harm to students.

Dr. Kaplan suggested creating language for courses with a TCCNS number to be required in the TCC, but an institution would be allowed to have other courses as well. This would allow transfer, but also the option for additional courses.

Dr. Abraham stated that an alternative legal interpretation for the sentence "the core curriculum shall be consistent with the common course numbering system approved by the board" was that any course at an institution mapped to the course numbering system must be publicly identified. He noted that not all courses in the TCCNS were in the TCC.

Rex Peebles, PhD, Assistant Commissioner of Academic Quality and Workforce, addressed the Committee by saying that transfer students may be required to take extra courses compared with native students, who can "double dip," if they have completed core courses by taking specific core courses required by the major. That is the concern about upper-division courses. The issue is not only transfer, but also what applies. He pointed out that legislators imply applicability when referring to transfer.

Dr. Peebles said that honors courses could be recognized as equivalent to TCCNS courses, even if the prefix and number are different. The course would have to fulfill the state requirement and the honors program requirement. Drs. Quintanilla and Brown did not agree that there is a TCCNS equivalent to an honors course. They may have a different level requirement. Dr. Quintanilla argued that a transfer student with credit for the TCCNS course, declared equivalent to an honors course, could demand honors credit. Dr. Peebles

said it should be possible to show in the TCCNS that equivalency is for core credit but not honors credit.

Dr. Miller asked about the "exemption" that may be granted by the Board in TEC 61.832 (d). Dr. Peebles clarified this would be an exemption to the requirement of listing equivalencies.

Dr. Abraham argued there are other specially constructed lower-division courses, not unlike honors courses, that are not mapped to the TCCNS. Dr. Peebles said it is a question of whether statute is met or should be changed.

Dr. Abraham said his institution did not require "double dipping" (of core courses and program courses) for completion of a program's credit requirements.

Dr. Longacre ask if there is evidence that upper-division core courses contribute to extra credit hours for transfer students. Dr. Brown said one could not conflate hours completed for the core with hours presented by transfer students at matriculation.

Dr. Abraham moved to accept the current Coordinating Board rule with regard to the general education requirement for the TCC, Texas Administrative Code Section 4.28 (a) (2), seconded by Dr. Quintanilla. Dr. Brown said he favored the motion, because as currently written, honors courses are not excluded. The motion carried in favor by 17 members, except for abstentions by Drs. Byerly, Kaplan, and Villarreal.

6. Update and Discussion on Coordinating Board Initiatives

Dr. Cornelius provided a brief update on applied baccalaureate degree program requests from public junior colleges. He explained that the Texas Education Code (TEC) specifies that community college baccalaureate offerings may only be in the fields of applied sciences, applied technology and nursing. Dr. Cornelius stated how the applied baccalaureate degree programs are designed to be responsive to employer demand, and provide the opportunity for students to remain current in their fields or to advance to management positions in their careers. The program requirements and review for approval was also explained. Eight community colleges in the state have one or more degrees of this type, for a total of 15 degrees, and four new applications are currently pending. There was a question whether applied baccalaureate degrees required the full core curriculum. [Staff note: yes, 42 SCH of core curriculum is required for all baccalaureate degrees, TEC 61.821- 61.832).]

Allen Michie, PhD, briefed the committee on Fields of Study (FOS) initiative. Dr. Michie explained that FOS ensure a student can transfer a completed FOS curriculum that will be substituted for the receiving institution's lower-division requirements and for which the student will receive academic credit toward the degree program. The FOS, if completed, is the complete lower-division requirement for the transfer student. The FOS was initiated by the legislature in response to the student debt crisis, to aid in reducing time to degree and thus reducing the cost of a degree. Dr. Michie said the Coordinating Board is on schedule with a target of 25 FOS curricula to be completed by the start of the 86th Legislature in January 2019. He encouraged institution leadership to regularly nominate faculty of all ranks to serve on FOS committees.

Dr. Abraham asked, with reference to additional cost, if time to degree and courses taken could be shown with completed semester credit hours (SCH), not attempted hours. Yes, and Dr. Peebles said completed hours would be 6 to 12 hours less than attempted hours.

Dr. Brown cast doubt on the projected cost saving through the FOS, since "hidden prerequisites," such as mathematics courses leading up to Calculus I for engineering, are not addressed by the FOS.

The Committee discussed the issue of lower-division FOS courses that are taught at the upper-division at the receiving institution.

Dr. Abraham asked if the state is doing a disservice to students with regard to some aspects of the FOS design, when the FOS does not include lower-division courses required of native students and crucial for the success in upper-division courses. Examples: Business Calculus I in the business FOS or Organic Chemistry II for biology. Dr. Peebles asked why 4-year institution representatives would let this happen and acknowledged that early on FOS advisory committees may not have understood the statutory requirement, and that the Coordinating Board is looking for increased clarity to facilitate student success.

Dr. Brown stated the workload challenge of manually identifying individual FOS courses on incoming transcripts. Dr. Peebles agreed and said that Coordinating Board staff have been discussing the issue with TACRAO.

Dr. Cornelius gave an update on the planned Coordinating Board's Liaisons Meetings for community, state and technical college liaisons (October 22 and 23, 2018) and for university and health related institution liaisons (summer 2019).

7. Consideration of Future Work and Meeting Dates

Members were reminded that the spring 2019 meeting is planned for April 26, 2019 and the fall 2019 meeting is planned for September 20, 2019.

Dr. Brown suggested future work should include a report about dual credit education in Texas, due for final release in December 2018. Dr. Cornelius agreed it could be considered for the spring 2019 agenda.

8. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 2:00 p.m.