

## Undergraduate Education Advisory Committee

April 21, 2017

### Draft Summary Notes

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**Members present:** Brett Millán (co-chair), Bill Adams, Melissa Armentor, Reginald Bell, Yvette Bendeck, Edward Byerly, Janna Chancey, Steven Daniell, Sonia Flores, Elizabeth Garcia, Nancy Martin, Sarah Maxwell, Richard Miller, Julie Penley, Shelia Amin Gutierrez de Pineres, Esther Rumsey, Janet Tareilo, Emily Wilson

**Members absent:** Ann Kenimer (co-chair), Kimberly Beatty, L. Joy Gates Black, William Harlow, Jerry King, Stephanie Legree-Roberts

**Visitors:** Larry Abraham (UT-Austin), Kevin Lemoine (UT System), Justin Louder (TTU), Jennifer Morgan (UT-Austin), Norma Perez (HCCS)

**Coordinating Board staff:** Reinold Cornelius, Assistant Director, Rex Peebles, Assistant Commissioner, Stacey Silverman, Deputy Assistant Commissioner, Melinda Valdez, Program Director

#### 1. Call to Order and Welcome

The meeting was called to order at 10 a.m. by Co-Chair Dr. Millán who asked all members and visitors to introduce themselves.

#### 2. Consideration of Summary Notes From the September 23, 2016 Meeting

Dr. Miller inquired why the topic of marketable skills wasn't included on the agenda for this meeting, as had been planned. Staff responded that it would be included on the agenda for the next meeting in September. Information requested at the previous September meeting was included in the agenda materials, including a map of the Colleges of the Texas Pathways Project, and enrollment and graduation data by gender for first-time, full-time, degree seeking undergraduates. Dr. Martin inquired about receiving meeting notes earlier, and staff agreed to email draft summary notes promptly after a meeting, rather than waiting until the next meeting. A motion was made by Dr. Daniell to accept the summary notes from the 2016 September meeting, seconded by Dr. Miller, and voted on in favor, unanimously.

#### 3. Discussion of Third Party Instructional Providers Contracting with Institutions for Undergraduate Course Credit

Dr. Millán introduced this item as requested by the Coordinating Board's Learning Technology Advisory Committee (LTAC) for UEAC feedback. He then introduced LTAC member Dr. Justin Louder, Associate Vice President for eLearning at Texas Tech University. Dr. Louder said the topic of Third Party Instructional Providers (TPIPs) had been an item of conversation for LTAC, and LTAC determined the topic would be of interest to UEAC as well. Dr. Louder stated that neither he, nor LTAC advocated for or against TPIPs.

Dr. Louder explained that in early 2017, the Presidents' Forum and the Distance Education Accrediting Commission held a national forum to discuss TPIPs. He quoted from a March 2017 report:

“If they have not done so already, alternative non-institutional based education providers arguably hold the potential of disrupting higher education by offering students a cost- and time-saving pathway to a degree or credential... Alternative or innovative providers are a growing sector of post-secondary education composed of companies and organizations that offer structured learning experiences or proficiency examinations untethered from the traditional college and university setting.”

Dr. Louder stated advantages of TPIPs are that students can obtain credits for a low cost and TPIPs increase postsecondary education, access, and attainment through lowered barriers to higher education. A disadvantage is the unknown quality and rigor of the TPIPs, due to lack of third-party oversight.

Dr. Louder said the majority of TPIPs offer their courses online. Some offer hybrid courses, with a mix of face-to-face and online delivery. The majority of TPIP courses provide students little to no faculty interaction. Some hours of tutoring may be offered through a third party provider, other than the original TPIP. Syllabi seem to align with typical correspondence type courses. The coursework is completed at the student's own pace with work submitted at the end of the course. Course grades are issued. In order to receive credit a student must register for a course with a TPIP, determine which institution will accept the credit for the TPIP course, or utilize ACE's credit transcription of the course, if they are not able to find an institution who gives credit directly.

The American Council for Education's Alternative Credit Project is a collaboration with six alternative credit providers for credit recommendation for more than 100 lower-division courses, with crossover to the core curriculum.

The U.S. Department of Education's Educational Quality through Innovation Partnerships (EQUIP) initiative was launched for low-income students to access programs offered by non-traditional training providers who are in partnership with institutions of higher education.

Dr. Louder summarized: 1) TPIPs are not held to a third-party quality review process, which would increase TPIP costs if done; 2) TPIP course design may or may not be completed by someone with academic credentialing to teach a course at a traditional institution of higher education, potentially having implications for accreditation; 3) TPIP courses raise a concern about perceived rigor, and 4) TPIPs are a low-cost option for students, with cost per course as low as \$49.

Committee members discussed the question of faculty input from the traditional institution for TPIP courses and faculty academic qualifications at a TPIP. Information would have to be obtained from a TPIP directly.

Members discussed whether institutions accept course credit in transfer if faculty credentials were unknown. Some rely on ACE, as ACE is accredited. Dr. Louder said it is not possible to trace a course back to a TPIP during the transcription process, if it is being transferred by a partnering institution of higher education. Members questioned if TPIP transfer courses may appear similar to a transferred College Level Examination Program (CLEP) course, Advanced Placement (AP) course credit, or a credit by exam course. Institutions likely do not question ACE transcripts.

Dr. Peebles commented that TPIPs do not grant credit for a course, do not grant degrees, and are not accredited, as they only provide teachers for the course. They utilize the partnering

accredited traditional institutions of higher educational to award credit. He stated the process is handled similar to how they would examine a transcript for other non-traditional courses received for transfer.

Committee members raised concerns about what assurances partnering traditional institutions of higher education had for confirming the presence of core objectives in TPIP courses that were applied to the core curriculum. Dr. Peebles stated that it is incumbent to the institutions to confirm credit.

The Committee was concerned about whether TPIPs were being utilized for dual credit courses and it remained unclear if TPIPs require their clients to possess a high school diploma. Some institutions do not permit online classes for dual credit. Other institutions do, but require their own college faculty to provide the online course. Institutions are responsible for ensuring faculty credentials because they are responsible for awarding dual credit.

The lack of assurance to those paying for TPIP courses also was of concern. Members asked about admission requirements of prospective students and variability between TPIPs in this regard. Concerns included pre-requisite requirements for courses at traditional institutions of higher education and the possible lack of requirements at TPIPs.

Co-chair Dr. Millán summarized a seeming UEAC consensus on TPIPs, which appeared to him problematic because SACCSOC required transparency among transfer courses for transcript evaluation purposes. Dr. Louder summarized that LTAC felt TPIPs offer an innovative way to deliver education but also reminded UEAC of LTAC's concerns. LTAC will decide next steps at their upcoming meeting, after reviewing UEAC's discussion on the matter. Dr. Cornelius requested correspondence regarding this topic be shared with him for forwarding, once members briefed their home institutions for feedback. Feedback would be included on the September UEAC agenda.

#### **4. Consideration of the Texas Core Curriculum**

Dr. Cornelius introduced the topic of the Texas Core Curriculum (TCC) and individual skills attainment courses. He presented the Coordinating Board's response to The University of Texas System and Stephen F. Austin State University's letters of concern regarding individual skills attainment courses.

Dr. Martin asked for a status update on a moratorium on removing individual skills courses. Dr. Cornelius said a moratorium was not possible, since new courses were requested all the time. The Coordinating Board is following UEAC's recommendation not to delete the courses in question immediately, allowing for finalization by fall 2018.

Dr. Martin also asked for a status update regarding foreign language courses being reconsidered for removal from the TCC as possible skills attainment courses. Dr. Peebles replied they are under review. He said there are separate issues with skill attainment courses and foreign language courses. He thought that less than half of bachelor degree programs in Texas required a foreign language. Dr. Martin asked if the current foreign language courses slated for deletion are still being considered for deletion at this time. He stated there is a clear distinction between first year and second year language courses. He further stated introductory language courses do not fit in any Foundational Component Area (FCA), and asked UEAC to examine how these courses might fit into the Component Area Option (CAO) of the TCC. He also stated that current discussion by the Texas Legislature involved transfer and the TCC. He said the transferability

workgroup comprised of three senators were surprised to discover the state of Texas doesn't have a single core curriculum.

Co-chair Dr. Millán asked how Texas compares to other states regarding core curriculum and foreign language, particularly with flagship institutions in other states also under SACSCOC accreditation. A cursory review showed him that most do have such a requirement, the University of Florida being an exception. Also, the University of Kentucky did not require foreign language due to lack of space in their core curriculum, but required a foreign language proficiency test. He asked whether Texas higher education graduates would be considered less competitive in the global marketplace if foreign language is removed from the TCC.

Co-chair Dr. Millán asked if a formative assessment of the TCC was planned for the future. Dr. Peebles answered that there is nothing to prevent the Coordinating Board to review and tweak the TCC, if so desired. Dr. Peebles said that possible TCC expectations may arise via legislation and he agrees with revisiting transferability of courses and transfer pathways, specifically looking into reducing the core instead of expanding it. He cautioned on focusing on certain courses. He further discussed how the Component Area Option (CAO) was changed at the Board level, away from what was originally intended by UEAC during the revision process. He also mentioned the idea to drop the semester credit hour requirement of the 42-hour core to a 36-hour core, eliminating the CAO.

Dr. Bell asked if any courses slated for removal had been reinstated after modification. Dr. Cornelius answered that yes, decisions were not made merely based on course title or based on declared ACGM equivalency, but based on a course-by-course review. Some courses had remained approved, for example some music courses were found to have a misleading title.

Ms. Chancey asked about future expansion of Field of Study (FOS) courses. Students easily confuse TCC credit with degree requirements. Co-chair Dr. Millán remembered 2011 UEAC discussions regarding TCC tracks, now known as pathways. Dr. Peebles replied that the FOS was indeed undergoing expansion and that the Coordinating Board would be charged with identifying the top 25 majors. The top 25 majors for transfer students accounted for 65 to 70 percent of all transfer; 75 percent of all bachelor graduates had obtained community college credit, and 35 percent had more than 30 hours of community college course credit. Current legislation is proposed to examine the need for increased FOS funding for the expansion. Current FOS committees identify TCC courses aligned with FOS, something not done in the past. The FOS would assist with the common issue of students who have core credit but find it does not apply toward their major.

Dr. Peebles stated that the TCC was originally conceived as a block of courses that would apply to any major. However, the TCC does not currently reflect that idea. There are really only 12 hours in the TCC that are guaranteed a seamless transfer for degree requirements and those are in American History and Government/Political Science, as required by statute. He said he would like UEAC to examine transferability.

Dr. Bell referenced Mark Van Doren's book, *Liberal Education*, and how it seemed to align with the original idea of the TCC. He asked why the TCC has changed so much. Dr. Peebles stated the original elements of the TCC are still present.

Shelia Amin Gutierrez de Pineres said learning a new language adequately addresses the minimal cultural requirements that are required in the Language, Philosophy & Culture FCA. Dr. Peebles stated that the issue relates to the first year language courses and how the cultural component is

not developed enough to qualify at the minimum level for the definition of the FCA. Steven Daniell said first year language courses teach about culture from the first day and are adequate enough to meet the minimal requirements of the FCA.

Ms. Flores asked what was meant by the term "skills development." Dr. Peebles said the term may be unfortunate, but was based on the SACSCOC notion of general education: skills development falls outside what every student needs to know as foundational knowledge as graduates with a bachelor's degree.

Dr. Rumsey stated an inherent contradiction of definitions given for a skills course. The skills to effectively communicate is valued and a public speaking course is highly encouraged, but if it was an introductory language course, then it is being said it doesn't belong in the TCC. She didn't see a distinction between the two. Dr. Peebles shared how the presence of oral communication was debated for inclusion in the TCC, because of a concern of what is fundamental to most/all for a general education course for core curriculum. Dr. Cornelius said the distinction was individual attainment skills versus core curriculum skills. Dr. Rumsey disagreed and said that the core objective of critical thinking, and not only the technical focus present in language and creative arts courses, is valuable to a student's overall skill set.

Dr. Martin expressed concerns about timing and asked if there would be any change to the removal of courses. Co-chair Dr. Millán suggested a subcommittee to work on this issue. Co-chair Dr. Millán said he would work with Dr. Cornelius on a subcommittee and asked members to email Dr. Cornelius if they were interested in joining the subcommittee.

Dr. Martin asked for an update on Senate Bill 2122 by Senator West, relating to transfer and the Texas Common Course Numbering System (TCCNS). She asked if enforcing the required TCCNS designation for all TCC courses would possibly occur as early as next year. Dr. Peebles said the timetable was still up for discussion.

Former UEAC member Larry Abraham addressed the Committee, favoring an expanded rather than reduced core curriculum, given UT Austin's philosophy to enrich opportunities for students. He then enumerated all courses that were proposed, this year, as additions to UT Austin's core curriculum, but were not approved, quoting the reason for non-approval.

Dr. Cornelius introduced the topic of core completion for students with completed baccalaureate degrees. According to Coordinating Board rules, courses that students completed at a private or out-of-state institution prior to admission at a public institution should be evaluated on whether they apply to one of the core curriculum FCAs.

Dr. Gutierrez de Pineres posed the question, whether completed bachelor degree holders from a non-public institution seeking a second degree at a public institution, could be considered "core complete" generally, without individual course review by the receiving institution. Dr. Cornelius cautioned that the statutory requirements for American History and Government/Political Science would have to be observed for any public institution's degree.

Committee members discussed other complications. Requirements in other states may be very different from Texas requirements. Phrasing for a statement for core completion may be important, considering also for-profit institutions. Members discussed the distinction between acceptance of core completion through bachelors from "anywhere," complete rejection of a statement of core completion, or giving as much credit as possible. Members suggested that ultimately this could require a legal judgement, maybe from the attorney general. Overall the

topic seemed too complex and varied for the committee to make a categorical statement of core completion for completed bachelor degrees.

## **6. Discussion on the Texas Core Curriculum Assessment Reports**

Dr. Cornelius presented a proposal for an expanded Core Curriculum assessment guide and a guide for the institutions' ten-year reports. The guide includes a suggested report structure. It also provides a list of assessment items outlining a suggested scope for the assessment and the report. Coordinating Board staff review reports and give feedback with a qualitative differentiation between reports that either need improvement, satisfactorily meet expectations, or fully meet expectations.

Asked for the difference between reports that satisfactorily or fully meet expectations Dr. Cornelius explained that the former addresses all Core Objectives and the latter exceeds such minimum standard.

Discussion resulted in the informal recommendation to make explicit the question about what the institution did to close the loop between assessment and core curriculum improvement. Discussion also suggested that UEAC may consider "best practices," possibly with future subcommittee work.

## **7. Update on Low-Producing Program Review**

Dr. Cornelius explained the numeric measure of Low-Producing Programs (LPP). A list of LPP had recently been posted with LPP for academic year 2016. There were now 121 programs that had been LPP for three years in a row, up from 54 in the previous year. The reason was that programs lost "temporary exemptions" from review, granted under the previous rules that existed prior to 2013. Since the new statute and rules put the burden of closing or consolidating LPP to the university systems, staff was planning to ask the Board to recommend closure or consolidation to the institutions' governing boards. Institutions and governing boards would have a year to decide on action, before the LPP, which had been LPP for three years in a row and had not been closed or consolidated, would have to be reported on institutions' Legislative Appropriation Requests. The institution must then develop a plan for improvement or a rationale for the program's merits.

Members discussed the LPP threshold requirements for number of graduates over five-year periods. Asked how they had been established originally, Kevin Lemoine remarked that it had been done through comparison with other states. Asked whether it made statistically sense to use simple graduation averages over five years as measures, Dr. Cornelius reminded the Committee that the measures had been long-debated and deliberated at the Board level.

## **8. Consideration of Future Work and Meeting Dates**

Meetings are now planned one year in advance: the third Friday in April and September: April 21, 2017 and September 15, 2017. Information about committee members' cost for attending the meeting was collected, for required reporting to the Board.

The Committee planned to take up, at its next meeting, the topics of Marketable Skills, Pathway Project, and Texas Core Curriculum. Members wished to form a subcommittee on the TCC prior to the meeting. Another possible subcommittee concerning best practices for core assessment should be kept in mind.

## **9. Adjournment**

The meeting was adjourned at 2:40 p.m.