

Monday, 20 February 2012, 4:00-5:00 p.m.  
CS 4.7

### Assessment of the Proposed Core Objectives in Texas

Loraine Philips, Director of Institutional Assessment, Texas A & M University  
[and Danita McAnally from Amarillo College—but she could not be there]

#### Published Program Abstract (page 33):

This presentation will review the proposed changes to the core curriculum that will be considered by the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board. Specifically, the presenters will focus on the assessment of the proposed core objectives and the ideas related to the VALUE Rubrics developed by the Association of American Colleges and Universities (AAC&U). Case examples of core assessment from a university and a community college will be shared. [Since the speaker from a community college could not be present, that part of the talk was not given.]

[There were handouts, but there were not enough. The speaker said these would be posted on the conference's website.]

- Texas A & M University turned in their recommendation in April 2011.
- In 2009, the statewide Undergraduate Education Advisory Committee was set up. Its task was to review the core curriculum. The goal was to establish a common ground approach that would reflect 21<sup>st</sup> Century knowledge and skills. The recommendations were to be made within the existing legislative framework.
- Guidelines set out for undergraduate curricula in state schools in Texas in 1999 had 51 components—6 intellectual competencies, 8 perspectives, and 37 Exemplary Educational Objectives (EEOs). The 37 EEOs each had to be assessed. Before there is an assessment plan, outcomes need to be specified.
- In October 2011, proposed Texas State Objectives were accepted. It does not involve course-based assessment. The Coordinating Board has a separate project going on, the Academic Course Guide Manual.
- The Texas State Objectives involves the assessment of core objectives.
- The Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB) agreed that the state requirements would be those of SACS. The speaker said something to the effect that these core objectives followed SACSCOC Principles CR 2.7.3 and CS 3.5.1 (the latter on structuring the core).
- The THECB also agreed that there would be an alignment of timing so that the THECB core objectives assessment would be done two years prior to the SACSCOC reaffirmation year.

- Texas A & M University used their SACS report of September 2011 as their report to the THECB in October 2011.
- The speaker said there were six core objectives, but did not leave the slide up long enough. The purpose of assessment was to look at these core objectives.
- The state core curriculum—“A Focus on 21<sup>st</sup> Century Competencies”
- The requirements of the assessment process—An assessment report will be submitted electronically every ten years (just prior to the SACS review). The Coordinating Board will process the report to confirm that there has been assessment of the six core objectives.
- The speaker presented three options for evaluating the core objectives. The first was that institutions are encouraged to participate (voluntarily) in a peer review of the assessment of the six core objectives; this can be done verbally as in a conference call. Texas A & M University asked the University of Houston to do this with them. Texas A & M University felt this was useful and they made use of recommendations. Two more options were mentioned, but, again, she went too fast over the slide and I did not get those recorded.
- Texas A & M University has an Office of Institutional Assessment. That office is doing a pilot program of assessment.
- Texas A & M University has an academic master plan.
- Texas A & M University has devised undergraduate learning outcomes.
- Learning outcomes, as outlined by both THECB and Texas A & M University, are basically in alignment. Critical thinking is a key learning outcome.
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- The speaker then showed a slide on the assessment of learning outcomes. There was a handout, but there were not enough available. Learning outcomes are to be aligned with appropriate measures. This method was a “one stop shot” for assessing the General Education core. She said that oftentimes the assessment process for an outcome lacked a direct means of measurement.

Outcome	Assessment	Type of measure (direct or indirect)

- One mechanism for gauging critical thinking is to use the Critical Thinking Assessment Test (CAT). This instrument was chosen by the faculty, not by the Institutional Assessment Office. Texas A & M University begins scheduling the administration of the CAT in the summer, then administers it in the fall, and turns in results in December.

- Another assessment measure is to evaluate papers written by students. A process has been instituted in which papers submitted from throughout the university are scored for writing ability. The papers are submitted in the spring semester and the papers are scored on Reading Day. Faculty from around the campus participate in scoring papers. The speaker said she has had no difficulty recruiting faculty who are interested in doing this.
- Most Aggie students take a course (COMM 203), mostly as upperclassmen, that involves public speaking. During the course, the student gives four speeches. As part of the university's assessment of students' abilities at oral communication, the fourth speech is now being used for assessment; the fourth speech is judged on the basis of a faculty-designed rubric.
- She did note that some Texas A & M University students may take the majority of their core courses elsewhere.
- The speaker has an assessment liaison in every college in the University. This person serves as a "communication funnel."
- She said that scoring on assessment of objectives has involved cross-disciplinary groups of faculty.
- She said she has a waiting list of faculty who want to be involved.