

Updated Frequently Asked Questions November 10, 2008

1. How was feedback used to prepare the Core 2009 Curriculum Recommendations?

The committee identified a list of issues/concerns and sorted all feedback by issue. EACH committee member read ALL of the sorted feedback. Subcommittees carefully re-read all Feedback for ONE issue. A subcommittee member contacted persons who made the suggestion if additional information was needed or sought input from additional sources. Subcommittees assigned to each issue made a presentation to the committee, highlighting the key points. After discussion, the committee identified possible revisions/solutions, first in small groups and then as a whole group. The pros/cons for each suggested revision were identified. Based on the analysis of the pros/cons of each suggested revision, the committee made revisions to the First Draft and the Revised Draft. The committee prepared and distributed written responses via email to District Discipline Committees and individuals. All District Discipline Committee responses were posted on the Web page, www.dcccd.edu/core2009.

2. How can the Core 2009 committee make a decision that differs from the recommendation of a discipline committee?

Our charge was to develop a General Education Core that serves the best interests of DCCCD students. We believe that based on quantitative and qualitative academic research on issues regarding higher education, coupled with faculty and student feedback, that the recommendations in the Revised Draft best meet the needs of our 21st century students.

3. How was the final forum feedback used to prepare the Core 2009 Curriculum Recommendations and what are the “next steps” after it is released in November?

The committee analyzed feedback received at the final round of forums and prepared the *Core 2009 Curriculum Recommendations*. The *Core 2009 Curriculum Recommendations* will be posted on the Web page in November and submitted, along with all research, to the VP Council at their November meeting. The VP Council will receive, review and present the *Core 2009 Curriculum Recommendations* to the Chancellor’s Staff, The Board of Trustees and the THECB for approval. Upon approval, Interdisciplinary Committees will be convened along with Discipline Committees to implement the recommendations. It is expected that some elements of the Core 2009 Curriculum will require additional time to implement.

The Core 2009 committee will design a process for regular, ongoing review and revision of the Core curriculum. This process is intended to make the Core responsive to the needs of future students, changes in THECB regulations, and insights from faculty and staff.

4. Who are the members of the Core 2009 committee and how were these members selected?

The Faculty Association Presidents of each college were asked to submit the names of several faculty members to the college Vice Presidents. The VP Council selected two faculty members to represent each college from this list of names. Members were selected to provide perspective from each THECB component area discipline grouping with a blend of both new and veteran faculty members. The list of committee members can be found at www.dcccd.edu/core2009.

5. What was the Core 2009 committee charged to do, and how can I find out how the Revised Draft of the Core was developed?

The VP Council gave the committee 9 charges. These charges and a response to each charge describing the committee's work can be found at www.dcccd.edu/core2009. At the Web page, you can also find a summary of monthly activities since work began in September 2007.

6. Computer Literacy does not appear as a Core 2009 REQUIREMENT. Does this mean that the committee believes that students already possess necessary computer literacy skills?

No, the committee is aware that some, but not all students possess computer literacy skills. The committee believes that computer literacy skills are essential to success in all REQUIRED Core courses. The current enrollment patterns indicate that COSC 1300 (intended to provide these skills) is one of the last four courses taken by Core completers. This pattern indicates that students who enroll in this course are not taking it to acquire and apply skills necessary for college course work. Feedback from students, faculty, and advisors provide additional information:

- a. Many students believe that they are computer literate, even though they are not. The Core 2009 committee strongly believes that students must have access to assessment data indicating computer deficiencies, if any. Knowledge of deficiencies, rationale for enrolling in a course to address these deficiencies and timely enrollment in a course is imperative for student success.
- b. Some students who currently enroll in COSC 1300 to become Core complete do not need the course. If a course is listed as a REQUIREMENT in the core, it cannot be waived, even if the student demonstrates competency. These students are spending time and money that could be used for other degree requirements. This is an important concern due to the "120 Hour Rule."
- c. Students who examine the current Core and believe that they are computer literate often elect to transfer without becoming Core complete to avoid the requirement. Students are prompted to do so when the receiving institution has a smaller Core or does not have a COSC requirement.

7. Although the Tier structure in Core 2009 is designed to offer a strategic approach to skill development and reinforcement, doesn't it in fact create barriers?

One of the highest priorities of the DCCCD is to promote student success. Research reveals that many students need to acquire critical skills essential to success in college courses through direct instruction in basic competencies. The Tier structure provides GUIDELINES for appropriate selection and sequence of course enrollment so that students are not prematurely enrolled in courses where these basic competencies are assumed to exist. Since the number of credit hours in each Tier differ, the Core 2009 committee expects that students will often be simultaneously enrolled in two Tiers (Tier 1 and 2 or Tier 2 and 3) as they progress through the core.

Tier 1 13 credit hours
Tier 2 26 credit hours
Tier 3 3 credit hours

8. Core 2009 provides more course options and greater flexibility for students. Won't this create scheduling problems and difficulty in finding faculty qualified to teach some of these courses?

Colleges are not expected to offer every course in the approved Core 2009 Curriculum. Course offerings at each college will be based on faculty expertise, scheduling and space constraints, and student interest. The Core 2009 committee is also charged to "recommend a process by which the Core Curriculum can be revised once its recommendations are adopted." Courses included in Core 2009 will be reviewed and modified in the future based upon changes in what students must know and be able to do upon completion of the DCCCD Core Curriculum.

9. Will all courses included in Core 2009 transfer?

Yes. A core course must be accepted by the receiving institution, even if the course is not included in the receiving institution's core. Core courses will definitely transfer to Texas public institutions as a core course; core courses will definitely transfer as elective courses; and some core courses will transfer to meet specific degree requirements. All recommended courses in the proposed core can be found in the Lower Division Academic Course Guide Manual, which lists all state approved academic freshman and sophomore level courses.

10. Why did the committee recommend a Core with only 42 credit hours?

The "120 Hour Rule" will penalize students who exceed a specified number of credit hours when completing a baccalaureate degree. Four-year institutions report that it is difficult for community college transfer students to complete the courses required for the major within the allowable hours when the students transfer with Cores that exceed 42 hours. A smaller Core with more course options enables students to select Core or elective courses that fulfill requirements related to their major. Future funding for higher education will be based on a number of success metrics, including Core completers. The design of Core 2009 is intended to make it possible for more students to successfully complete the Core.

11. How does Core 2009 make it possible for more transfer students to become Core complete?

When students transfer (especially from private and out of state colleges) to the DCCCD many encounter difficulties completing the current Core. For example, a student may have earned college credit for a physical education activity course but would need to enroll in PHED 1164 to become Core complete. Another example; the BIOL 2401 prerequisite can be met with SCIT 1407 (rather than BIOL 1406) which is not a Core course. Or BIOL 2401 can be taken at another institution where the prerequisite does not apply. In these cases, students who have completed BIOL 2401 and 2402 would not be Core complete unless they enroll in 2 additional lab science courses that are listed in the current Core. Students who complete these additional courses will likely violate the "120 Hour Rule."

To examine the core requirements of any 2 or 4-year institution in Texas, log on to

<http://statecore.its.txstate.edu/>

12. Since the VP Council prepared the charges that guided the committee's work, did the VP Council consult with committee members or attempt to influence their decisions?

There was no interaction between the VP Council and the Core 2009 committee until after the First Draft was released on June 16. Dr. Allatia Harris and Becki Williams,

committee chair, conducted several information sessions the week of June 23 to answer questions about the core. Two meetings were held with Academic Deans, one with Student Service leaders, one with the VP Council, another with COSC Discipline Committee faculty and a final meeting with Faculty Association Presidents.

13. Is it possible to combine courses into one THECB component area (Communications, Mathematics, Natural Sciences, Humanities, Visual and Performing Arts, US History, Political Science or Social and Behavioral Science) that do not address the same Exemplary Education Objectives established by the THECB?

The THECB provides descriptions of the type of courses that can be included in each component area. All courses included as options in that component area must address a majority of the EEOs for that area. For example, a lab science course cannot be listed as an option for the Mathematics component area. The only exception to this constraint is the Institutional Option Component Area. However, courses listed as options (not individual requirements) must address the same EEOs. The First Draft of the Core 2009 curriculum recommends an expanded interpretation of Wellness. If this feature of the First Draft is approved, an interdisciplinary committee will be charged to develop the Wellness EEOs for this component area.

14. Are there models for core curriculum with a thematic structure?

An essay by Mary Taylor Huber with the Integrative Learning Project funded by the Carnegie Foundation cites several universities and colleges that have developed core curricula organized with a thematic structure rather than distribution format.

http://www.carnegiefoundation.org/files/elibrary/integrativelearning/uploads/curriculum_copy.pdf

The American Association of Colleges and Universities identifies promising models for general education that include cores with thematic formats at the following site:

<http://www.aacu.org/resources/generaleducation/promisingmodels.cfm>

Another useful resource is the document, *College Learning for the New Global Century* published through the LEAP initiative of the AAC &U citing a need to “recalibrate college learning to the needs of the new global century...”

http://www.aacu.org/leap/documents/GlobalCentury_final.pdf

15. There is only one course in Tier 3. Why did the committee not include course options in Tier 3 that are more diverse and broader in scope than GOVT 2302?

Adjustment to the courses offered in Tier 3 has the potential of adding 3 hours to the core, unless GOVT 2302 is moved to Tier 2 and all courses from one component area are moved to Tier 3. No other courses can be listed as an option with GOVT 2302, since it is a REQUIRED course.

The emphasis in Tier 3 is not on the content of any one course, but on the opportunity to INTEGRATE knowledge and skills learned, reinforced and applied in Tiers 1 and 2. An interdisciplinary committee made up of faculty from Tier 2 and Tier 3 disciplines will be asked to develop activities and strategies that give students the intellectual practice to make connections between disciplines and domains that are usually encountered in isolation. Topics listed for inclusion in GOVT 2302 -civil rights and liberties, domestic policies, foreign relations and national defense – provide a context for students to make connections between multiple domains in Tier 2. The American Association of Colleges and Universities states that a liberal education is characterized by “challenging encounters with important issues...,” “prepares

graduates for socially valued work and for civic leadership in their society,” and is “more a way of studying than specific content.” The AAC&U describes a general education as “the part of the liberal education curriculum shared by all students. It provides a broad exposure to multiple disciplines and forms the basis for developing intellectual and civic capabilities.”

http://www.aacu.org/press_room/what_is_liberal_education.cfm

An integrative experience encountered in GOVT 2302 can provide students additional opportunities to develop intellectual and civic capabilities.

16. What was the rationale for expanding the course options in the Wellness and the Human Experience domain in Tier 1?

The THECB states in the Perspectives in the Core Curriculum that “The objective of disciplinary studies within a core curriculum is to foster multiple perspectives as well as to inform and deliver content. An imperative of a core curriculum is that it contains courses that help students attain the following perspectives ...

3. Recognize the importance of maintaining health and wellness...”

<http://www.thecb.state.tx.us>

The Core 2009 committee felt that students should be given opportunities to address this perspective in Tier 1. Students were asked in the forums conducted for them in January and February, 2008, “What can the district or your college do to help you achieve your goals?” A need for financial literacy, skills to manage relationships, help with issues related to substance abuse, and opportunities to participate in activities that reduce stress were among the responses given to the committee. The committee investigated how other colleges and universities core curricula address this perspective. This investigation revealed that some institutions address multiple dimensions of wellness including physical, social, spiritual, environmental, emotional, and intellectual wellness. <http://www.emich.edu/wellness/>

An expanded definition of wellness provides opportunities for students to acquire knowledge and skills to promote or improve their own well being. Introductory performing arts course are listed as options in this domain to expose students to various forms of artistic expression that promote wellness, reduce stress, uncover hidden talents and encourage a balanced, healthy lifestyle.

17. Due to the number of options provided for students and the reduction in the core to 42 hours, it is possible that students will complete the core without a course that is thought to be critical to a student’s education. Is that a concern to the committee?

The committee grappled with many difficult choices and will continue to do so when the revision process begins. The THECB states that “A core curriculum should be described and assessed by faculty and institutions in terms of basic intellectual competencies and perspectives, and of specified student outcomes rather than simply in terms of specific courses and course content.” The LEAP National Leadership Council provides a perspective echoed by Catherine Parsonault of the THECB at the North Texas Consortium Leadership Conference at UNT in September 2007. “General education plays a role, but it is not possible to squeeze all these important aims into the general education program alone. The majors must address them as well.” The committee is striving to balance the constraints imposed by the THECB component area requirements with the desire to provide a core that will operate in the best interest of DCCCD students.