CORE CURRICULUM COMMITTEE, SUMMARY OF ACTIVITIES
DECEMBER 15, 2008-May 31, 2009

This report covers the activities of the Core Curriculum Committee during the spring semester of 2009.

Steering Committee

The Core Curriculum Committee Steering Committee is charged with setting general policy for the Core Curriculum Committee and approving recommendations that come from the Core Area Committees. The Steering Committee met monthly during the spring semester of 2009 (January 16, February 12, March 12, and April 24, 2009). Actions of the Steering Committee during spring 2009 included:

- Approving the addition of 10 courses to the core curriculum and the removal of 107 courses from the core curriculum (see attached list). The latter included 90 foreign language courses removed from the humanities core requirement because their primary focus is on teaching language skills.
- Approved changes to the Core Curriculum Committee charge posted on the CCC website to eliminate confusing wording.
- Will review the CCC mission statement over the summer so that it can be brought more into conformity with the committee's responsibilities.
- Approved revised core course application forms that are adapted to the specific requirements of each core area.
- Implemented a document manager website that allows core course syllabi to be uploaded and reviewed. This website will make it possible to track all core course syllabi to insure compliance with core curriculum requirements.
- Reviewed the assessment plans that had been developed during the spring semester 2008 and recommended amendments as appropriate.
- Considered and rejected a policy that would have restricted future core course additions to lower-level courses that are not restricted by content or prerequisites to majors/minors in specific programs. The justification for rejection of this policy was that it limits the flexibility of the Core Area Committees to consider the special program needs of colleges and departments.
- Approved a one-year moratorium on adding new courses to the multicultural requirement while the multicultural committee considers revision of the requirement.
- Considered a recommendation that core curriculum courses not be allowed to satisfy more than one requirement. (Several political science courses currently may satisfy either the U.S. and Texas government requirement or the individual or group behavior requirement.) This recommendation was tabled pending collection of additional information.
- Encouraged the core area committees to work with departments to develop embedded assessments for core curriculum courses, especially those with large enrollments.

Core Area Committee activities

A.   Communication

- Coordinated assessment of ENGL 1301 and 1302 (the written communication core courses) and the courses that satisfy the oral communication requirement

- Attempted (unsuccessfully) to work with the Department of Petroleum Engineering to reinstate PETR 3308, Engineering Communication to the core

- Participated in the assessment conference held at TTU in December 2008

- Added new committee members from the library and Management Communication Center in the Jerry S. Rawls College of Business Administration

B. Mathematics

- Continued assessment of mathematics core curriculum courses

- Approved deletion of MATH 1350 from the core curriculum at the request of the department

C. Natural Science

- Continued assessment activities for natural science core courses

- Participated in the assessment conference held at TTU in December 2008

- Considered how to respond to assessment results from spring 2008 that indicate lower achievement in science classes for female students than male students

- Began to explore the possibility of creating an experimental interdisciplinary science core course that would focus on common elements among different science disciplines

D. Technology and Applied Science

- Continued assessment activities for technology and applied science core courses

- Conducted a review of all technology and applied science core courses based on syllabi submitted by participating programs. The review involved evaluation of 50 course syllabi

- Began a review of the technology and applied science core curriculum requirement. The objective statement for the requirement focuses on social implications of developments in technology and applied science, while most of the student enrollment is in courses that feature computer applications as a principal outcome.

- Carried out the first phase of an assessment of computer skills of entering freshman students The objective of this assessment is to determine the need for a core curriculum requirement in computer use/ information literacy.

E. Humanities

- Continued assessment activities for humanities core courses

- Reviewed the implications of the removal of the blanket statement that allowed humanities core credit for all foreign language courses

- Negotiated with the Department of Classical and Modern Languages and Literatures for the deletion of 90 foreign language courses from the core curriculum because their primary student learning outcomes focus on language learning instead of humanities. Foreign language courses with a primary focus on literature and/or culture remain in the humanities core.

- Began planning for a full review of all courses in the humanities core as part of the 5-year review cycle that was established by the General Education Committee

F. Visual and Performing Arts

- Revised the On-Line Student Assessment questions that were developed in spring 2009

- Continued embedded assessment activities in VPA core courses

- Reviewed requests for VPA core credit for transfer courses

G. Social and Behavioral Sciences

- Continued embedded assessment activities in Individual or group behavior courses

- Negotiated with the Departments of History and Political Science to place responsibility for assessment activities in the U.S. and Texas history and government core courses with those departments

Multicultural Requirement

- Continued assessment activities in multicultural core courses

- Developed and carried out embedded assessment in selected multicultural core courses

- Engaged in a continuing review of the multicultural requirement. Assessment results from 2008 indicate that TTU students multicultural knowledge and experience are well below national norms. The committee is investigating ways to deal with this issue

- Participated in the assessment conference held at TTU in December 2008

- Conducted training sessions for multicultural course instructors on multicultural issues and teaching techniques

- Engaged in active discussion of the structure of the multicultural requirement and the nature of the courses that currently fulfill this requirement

Foreign Language Requirement

- Continued the active assessment program in the introductory foreign language courses. These assessments were developed and administered by the Department of Classical and Modern Languages and Literatures. Because of this, the Foreign Language Core Area Committee serves largely as a vehicle for communicating between the CCC and the CMLL department.

Writing Intensive Requirement

- A writing intensive committee has not yet been appointed, but the CCC chair has met with Kathleen Gillis to discuss this possibility and some possible members have been identified.

- The CCC chair contacted all departments with more than 4 writing intensive courses listed in the catalog to suggest a review to determine if the number of WI courses could be reduced. This action was initiated because a course fee is now being assessed on WI courses to support the University Writing Center. As a result, several departments reduced the number of writing intensive courses in their inventory.

- There is a clear need to assess writing intensive courses in some standardized way. When the WI committee has been appointed this will be one of its first items of business.

Committee Chair Activities

Assessment

Request assessment plans from core area committee chairs and insure that the plans are carried out. Work with the Office of Planning and Assessment to insure that assessment results have been posted to TracDat and that committees are using assessment data to improve student learning in core curriculum courses.

Coordination

The chair coordinates the activities of the various core area committees and serves as chair of the Steering Committee. In this role he works with committee chairs to insure that the core area committees are functioning properly and carrying out their responsibilities. Generally, the committee chairs are working well and oversight can be light. However, in a few cases the chair has had to take a more active role in directing the activities of a core area committee in order to insure that it responds in a timely manner.

Liaison

The CCC Chair maintains more or less constant contact with offices that deal directly with various aspects of the core curriculum. In particular he works closely with Official Publications, which maintains the official list of core curriculum courses; with the university advising office, to keep advisors informed of changes in the core curriculum; with the Office of the Registrar, especially with respect to issues related to core credit for transfer courses; and with the Office of Institutional Research and Information Management, which is responsible for coding core curriculum courses in the Banner system.

Communication

The CCC Committee Chair is a paid administrative position while committee members serve as volunteers. Therefore, the CCC Committee Chair, in an effort to reduce the work load on core area committee chairs, handles communications for many of the core area committee activities such as the fifth-year evaluations, requests to add or delete courses from the core curriculum, questions regarding core curriculum credit for transfer courses and similar kinds of routine core curriculum committee activities.

Transfer Credit

The Office of the Registrar houses the Office of Transfer Evaluation. This office is responsible for evaluating courses transferred to Texas Tech University by students who have earned college credit elsewhere. The CCC Chair is working closely with this office and the University Advisor to develop a procedure for determining whether courses transferred from non-public Texas institutions of higher education satisfy a TTU core curriculum requirement.

Committee Membership

The CCC Chair works with core area committee chairs, deans and associate deans and faculty to identify and recruit faculty to serve on the core area committees. This is a continuous process since committee members may resign at any time, but it reaches a peak at the end of spring semester when committee members whose terms expire must be reappointed or replaced.

Maintain the CCC website

Insure that the CCC website is up-to-date and reflects current policies, core area committee membership, and other information.

Code of Conduct

In fall semester we received a complaint that a core area committee member had contacted a faculty member to request information about a core course. The complaint was resolved and the offending committee member voluntarily resigned from the CCC. However, to avoid any such incidents in the future we developed a Code of Conduct for CCC members. This Code of Conduct will be distributed to all members of the CCC at the first meeting in the fall.

Document Manager

The document manager is a website that accepts core course syllabi, which are then stored and made available for review by the CCC Chair and the various core area committees. This website was developed at the request of Dr. Raymond Desrosiers, former chair of the General Education Committee, and placed in operation in spring 2009. Since the passage of HB 2504, which requires that all course syllabi be posted, we may consider a different approach to posting syllabi.

Gary S. Elbow

Core Curriculum Committee Chair

June 30, 2009