



EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT AND PROVOST
THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT AUSTIN

1 University Station G1000 • Austin, Texas 78712-0538 • (512) 471-4363 • FAX (512) 475-7385

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April 23, 2009

Dr. David Prior
Executive Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs
The University of Texas System
OHH 403 (P4300)

Dear Dr. Prior,

Enclosed for your consideration and action is the Motion to Update the Core Curriculum Course Lists for the *Undergraduate Catalog, 2010-2012* (D 6976-6981). This motion proposes to update the listings of courses that may be counted toward each component area of the University's core curriculum.

All proposed changes to the core course lists have been made in consideration of what the University is now calling *Student Competencies* for each core component area. The *Student Competencies*, which were developed by the Undergraduate Studies Advisory Committee in consultation with faculty from across the University and Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB) staff, are based on and designed to demonstrate satisfaction of the Coordinating Board's *Exemplary Educational Objectives* as well as specific institutional goals for the core curriculum that have been articulated during our ongoing curriculum reform effort.

We received the Coordinating Board's approval of the University's current core curriculum framework on October 18, 2007 and approval of the core course lists for the *Undergraduate Catalog, 2008-2010* on March 24, 2008. The letters that we received from Dr. Joseph Stafford on those dates also raised several questions and potential areas of non-compliance, all of which have now been fully resolved as follows:

1. *What process is being developed to ensure that the relevant Exemplary Educational Objectives will be met by each Writing Flag course completed in partial satisfaction of the 6-hour requirement in communication (010)?*

The School of Undergraduate Studies has convened a Faculty Writing Committee including representatives from all colleges and schools teaching undergraduate students. The committee has expanded the Faculty Council's definition of the Writing Flag into a comprehensive explanation of the criteria

that all flagged courses must meet. These criteria have been designed specifically to help students meet the relevant *Exemplary Educational Objectives*, especially those focusing on critical thinking, modes of expression appropriate to audience and purpose, and the process of writing, revision, and rewriting. All courses proposed to carry a Writing Flag, and thus all courses satisfying this element of the core curriculum, will be certified by the Faculty Writing Committee and the Writing Coordinator who works with the committee as meeting these criteria.

We believe that both the existing SWC courses and the new Writing Flag courses meet the Coordinating Board's *Exemplary Educational Objectives* for the communication area of the core, but we plan to completely phase out the SWC requirements in favor of the more rigorous Writing Flag requirements in the near future.

2. *Are all undergraduates well served by the existing requirement that the humanities area of the core curriculum (040) be satisfied by only one course, English 316K?*

We have discussed this matter at length and currently plan to continue with E 316K as the only listed humanities course in the core curriculum. The Commission of 125 (an alumni advisory group) strongly urged us to avoid offering "cafeteria style" choices for fulfilling core requirements, and E-316K is one of very few courses that all UT students must complete.

While we believe that a core literature requirement serves our students well, we are exploring ways to ensure that all students complete additional coursework in the humanities. Many of our degree programs have already implemented broader humanities requirements beyond the core curriculum.

3. *Some degree programs at the University do not specifically require a three-hour course in visual and performing arts (050). All degree programs must incorporate each element of the core before the University can be certified as compliant with statewide core curriculum regulations.*

The University's core curriculum framework now includes distinct component areas for humanities (040) and visual and performing arts (050), and we are very pleased to report that all undergraduate degree programs are on track to fully implement the core for the *Undergraduate Catalog, 2010-2012*. All known cases of this problem have now been corrected, including the most difficult cases in the degree programs offered by the Butler School of Music.

4. *The University appears to require a separate three-hour course on Texas Government, which is not mandated by statute. This is merely a point of clarification.*

Our requirement is a six-hour sequence in American Government, with an emphasis on the American and Texas constitutions, as required by statute. The University does offer a separate 1-hour course on Texas government for out of state transfer students who have completed five or more hours in American government and are missing the necessary Texas component.

Under the proposed course list revisions, all students will complete Government 310L, and students will select from Government 312L, 312P, and 312R to complete the six-hour requirement. All permitted combinations of these courses will cover the material required by statute.

5. *Has the University developed a set of educational objectives that reflect the learning goals that will be held in common by the Signature Courses fulfilling the Institutionally Designated Option (090) area of the University's core curriculum?*

Yes. Please see my letter to Dr. Stafford dated April 28, 2008, in which I explained that the University has identified the Signature Course program as the subject of the Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP) required by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS) for reaffirmation of accreditation. In the process of developing the QEP, we distilled the goals of the Signature Course program into six educational objectives, each with specific, measurable outcomes. We plan to use these educational objectives, which I attached to my April 28, 2008 letter, for Signature Course selection, development, and assessment in line with both SACS and THECB requirements, including the periodic core curriculum evaluation due to THECB on or before October 1, 2015.

6. *No other Texas institution currently lists mathematics courses as part of the natural science or additional natural science component areas. Will the University consider removing the mathematics courses from the additional natural science (031) area of its core curriculum?*

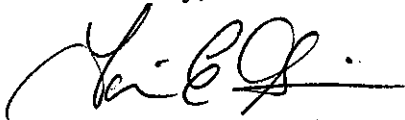
The enclosed motion removes all mathematics courses from the course list for the University's Science & Technology Part II requirement, which maps to the Additional Natural Science area (031) of the statewide core curriculum framework. Additional work is planned for the next *Catalog* development cycle to add to this area "science, engineering, and technology courses that [address] problems facing society today and in the future," in line with prior Faculty Council legislation and the relevant *Exemplary Educational Objectives*.

As explained above, we believe that the attached motion brings the University into full compliance with statewide core curriculum requirements. The University will be

pleased to submit further evidence of its compliance as part of the core curriculum evaluation due to the Coordinating Board in 2015.

This motion was approved by the Faculty Council at its meeting on April 13, 2009 and subsequently approved by the Office of the Executive Vice President and Provost. Final approval rests with the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board. Upon UT System approval, we request that you forward this letter and the attached motion to THECB for final approval.

Sincerely,



Terri E. Givens, Ph.D.
Vice Provost and Associate Professor
Frank C. Erwin, Jr. Centennial Honors Professor

TEG: ccm Enclosures

copy (letter only):

William Powers, Jr., President of the University
Steven Leslie, Executive Vice President and Provost
Charles Roeckle, Deputy to the President
Paul Woodruff, Dean, Undergraduate Studies
Cale McDowell, Deputy to the Dean, Undergraduate Studies
Neal Armstrong, Vice Provost for Faculty Affairs
Kristi Fisher, Associate Vice Provost and Director, IMA
Maryann Ruddock, Associate Vice President, IMA
Laura Kobler, Associate Registrar, Office of the Registrar
Keith Baird, Assistant to the Director, Office of Admissions
Sue Greninger, Secretary of the Faculty Council and General Faculty
Deborah Roberts, Executive Assistant, Office of the General Faculty