

**FACULTY SENATE – NOVEMBER 8, 2012
MEETING
UNIVERSITY CURRICULUM COMMITTEE
REPORT #1**

The University Curriculum Committee (UCC) previously reviewed and presented recommendations for approval for 117 course proposals for the UTSA Core Curriculum, and these were approved by the Faculty Senate at the September 13, 2012, meeting. The UCC also reviewed and an additional 20 course proposals and presented recommendations at the October 11, 2012, Faculty Senate meeting. The UCC recommended that 10 proposals be approved and 10 be denied. The Faculty meeting approved the report and recommendations. In addition, the UCC had reviewed one additional course proposal, Academic Introduction & Strategies, but it was in the process of obtaining additional information regarding development of course content as well as implementation. The committee has completed its review of the course and provides the following information for consideration.

Background Information

Required Core Curriculum

On October 27, 2011, the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB) approved the proposal for a revised core curriculum beginning in the fall of 2014. Under the revised core curriculum, all institutions will have a 42-semester credit hour

(SCH) core (no exceptions). The core curriculum consists of the eight component areas (CA) shown in Table 1. The number of SCHs required in each component area is also provided in Table 1.

Table 1. Eight Component Areas and Required SCH

Component Area	Required SCH
American History	6
Communication	6
Creative Arts	3
Government/Political Science	6
Language, Philosophy, and Culture	3
Life and Physical Sciences	6
Mathematics	3
Social and Behavioral Sciences	3
Total SCH	36

In addition to the 36 SCHs shown in Table 1, 6 hours may be allocated to any of the eight component areas to complete the required 42 hours.

Revised UTSA Core Curriculum

In addition to the UTSA Core Curriculum meeting the required 36 hours noted in Table 1, it was proposed that a 3-hour course (Academic Introduction & Strategies) be included in the core curriculum of all UTSA students. This course will be included in the Language, Philosophy and Culture component. Thus, the number of required SCHs would increase from 3 to 6 required

SCHs for that component. The remaining 3 SCHs may be included in any of the eight component areas. This option may be based upon major requirements or at the election of the student.

Freshman Focus Task Force

In the fall of 2010, the Provost appointed a Freshman Experience Task Force to develop recommendations to foster freshman retention and success. One of the recommendations provided by the Task Force was to have incoming freshmen enroll in a first-year course block, which included a writing course and academic introduction course.

<http://provost.utsa.edu/home/docs/Report-Freshman-Experience-Task-Force.3.pdf>

Graduation Rate Improvement Plan

The University of Texas Board of Regents requested a strategic plan for improving four-year graduation rates. In December 2011, UTSA released its Four-Year Graduation Rate Improvement Plan (GRIP). A section on the Freshman Focus (FF) initiative was included in the GRIP. It stated that in the fall of 2011, UTSA had begun implementation of a FF plan to enhance the freshman year academic and student support experience. The plan included among items, the introduction of an Academic Introduction course.

Academic Introduction & Strategies (AIS) Course

National Attention

Some universities have provided undergraduate students with the opportunity to experience learning through, and about, inquiry and scholarship for several years. This undergraduate scholarship idea began by giving selected students in selected universities an opportunity to engage in inquiry and research either as part of the curriculum or as co-researchers. Some educators believe the inquiry and research concept should be expanded to include as many students as possible. However, one of the key issues faced by educators is how to facilitate the integration of undergraduate inquiry and research into the curriculum. Some universities focus on engaging undergraduates at the beginning of their academic studies and others later in their academic career. Often the inquiry-based courses are related to a specific major or area. In a number of cases, the inquiry concept is linked to writing courses. UTSA has embarked on an ambitious undertaking to include all freshmen and to include more than one area.

UTSA's AI&S Course

The initial proposal for an academic introduction course was suggested by the Task Force and modified by Academic Introduction Sub-committee. The latest proposal was developed by a separate ad hoc committee and then approved by the Freshman Focus Steering Committee. See Appendix A for proposal.

The UCC reviewed the proposal, syllabus (Appendix B), and Assessment Plan (Appendix C). Questions were raised about the level of the content, consistency across sections, one instructor teaching in all three academic areas, implementation, etc. The UCC requested additional information from the Associate Vice-Provost (Core Curriculum) and Freshman Focus Steering Committee.

Refer to Appendix D for the response to our request. Some of our key concerns were addressed, such as the appropriate level for freshmen and consistency across sections. These issues will be managed by a process whereby ad hoc committee members and others will help design the course, the steering committee will oversee the ad hoc committees, pilots of the course will be conducted in the fall of 2013, summer institute for training faculty will be provided, and a Faculty Oversight Committee will be responsible for approving and overseeing the course.

The UCC agrees that the first-year college experience is important in helping students become successful in their college career, and that an academic introduction course is only one of the methods proposed to support the freshmen initiative. This course is directly linked to the GRIP and its objectives. Thus, it is important that the **process** be fully implemented to ensure that this ambitious undertaking succeeds.

The UCC recommends that the Academic Introduction and Strategies course be approved as the designated course in the University Core Curriculum under the Language, Philosophy & Culture component and that this component be expanded to 6 SCHs.