

**Texas A&M International University
Core Curriculum Institutional Effectiveness Review (CCIER)**

Core Curriculum Academic Discipline: BEHAVIORAL SCIENCES

Assessment Period Covered: Sept. 1, 2010 to May 31, 2011

Discipline Coordinator (Preparer of Report):

Dr. Frances P. Bernat

List Other Academic Discipline Faculty:

Dr. Christopher Ferguson

Dr. John Kilburn

Dr. Bonnie Rudolph

Dr. Claudia San Miguel

The Core Curriculum Institutional Effectiveness Review supports the following imperative of the Texas A&M International University 2011-2015 Strategic Plan:

Imperative 3: Teaching and Learning-- Enhance the educational environment by promoting excellence in teaching and learning.

Institutional Mission

Texas A&M International University, a Member of The Texas A&M University System, prepares students for leadership roles in their chosen profession in an increasingly complex, culturally diverse state, national, and global society ... Through instruction, faculty and student research, and public service, Texas A&M International University embodies a strategic point of delivery for well-defined programs and services that improve the quality of life for citizens of the border region, the State of Texas, and national and international communities.

Core Curriculum Mission

At Texas A&M International University, the Core curriculum introduces students to academic disciplines which form the foundation of human thought: mathematics, science, history, language, literature, the arts, and social and behavioral sciences. Our Core is conceived to open new areas of learning for our students and to foster skills necessary for success in higher education.

As they move through this course of study, students are encouraged, as their knowledge increases, to develop the capacity to articulate and support a thesis, to think critically, to synthesize their observations and to perceive analogies and relationships between seemingly diverse ideas and intellectual pursuits.

Provide summary of the last cycle’s use of results and changes implemented:

The statement should include a concise analysis of the assessment data collected during the previous year, a brief explanation of actions taken to address specific outcomes, an evaluation of how these actions contributed to the improvement of the program, and any recommendations formulated.

The Behavioral Sciences Department has three programs that offer core curriculum courses: Criminal Justice, Psychology and Sociology. Last year, each program was responsible for analyzing their own courses and providing individualized reports.

The Criminal Justice Program’s conclusions were as follows: Most students who enrolled in the class mastered skills such as: focusing on the main idea of their paper, proper organization of information, adequate development of main issues, proper sentence style and structure, good grammar and mechanics, and incorporating current research into their essay.

The Psychology Program’s conclusions were as follows: Evidence suggests that we are close to, but not at our target performance.

The Sociology Program’s conclusions were as follows: The primary conclusion is that our students can do quality work but many of them struggle with the workload of a comprehensive course. We have noticed that some of the students that struggled had not yet completed the Sociological Theory and/or Research Methods course. This is a problem because as a small program, we can only offer Senior Pro-seminar once per year.

Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board Exemplary Educational Objectives for the following academic discipline:

BEHAVIORAL SCIENCES

1. To employ the appropriate methods, technologies, and data that social and behavioral scientists use to investigate the human condition.
2. To examine social institutions and processes across a range of historical periods, social structures, and cultures.
3. To use and critique alternative explanatory systems or theories.
4. To develop and communicate explanations or solutions for contemporary social issues.
5. To analyze the effects of historical, social, political, economic, cultural and global forces on the area under study.
6. To comprehend the origins and evolution of U.S. and Texas political systems, with a focus on the growth of political institutions, the constitutions of the U.S. and Texas, federalism, civil liberties, and civil and human rights.
7. To understand the evolution and current role of the U.S. in the world.
8. To differentiate and analyze historical evidence (documentary and statistical) and differing points of view.
9. To recognize and apply reasonable criteria for the acceptability of historical evidence and social research.

10. To analyze critically, assess, and develop creative solutions to public policy problems.
11. To recognize and assume one's responsibility as a citizen in a democratic society by learning to think for oneself, by engaging in public discourse, and by obtaining information through the news media and other appropriate information sources about politics and public policy.
12. To identify and understand differences and commonalities within diverse cultures.

Section I: Planning and Implementation

Outcome(s):

From the list above, identify the outcome(s) that will be focused upon this year. (It is recommended that academic disciplines rotate through their entire set of Exemplary Educational Objectives over a multi-year period. Thus, disciplines are encouraged to focus only on a few outcomes each year.) To facilitate the completion of this report, please refer to the Core Curriculum Matrix completed for each academic discipline.

1. To employ the appropriate methods, technologies, and data that social and behavioral scientists use to investigate the human condition.
2. To examine social institutions and processes across a range of historical periods, social structures, and cultures.

Please indicate if the outcome(s) is (are) related to writing (Write On, TAMIU!).

Methods of assessment to be used:

The explanation should identify and describe the type of assessment(s) that will be used (e.g., survey, questionnaire, observation instrument, test, rubric to evaluate performance, standardized examination, action research, interviews, etc.), who will provide the information, and how the data will be obtained.

The Behavioral Sciences Department consolidated its process for assessing the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board Exemplary Educational Objectives for the academic disciplines' core curriculum (including Criminal Justice, Psychology and Sociology). Instead of having each program analyze their own core curriculum, the Department coordinated administration of the assessment in the Spring 2011.

To assess objectives 1 and 2 (above), one survey was created that asked students in the Behavioral Sciences Department's core curriculum (Introductory) courses to answer questions pertaining to the discipline. There were five classes that administered the survey: one Introduction to Criminal Justice course, CRIJ 1301; three Introduction to Psychology courses, PSYC 2301; and one Introduction to Sociology course, SOCI 1301. The same survey was given at the beginning of the semester (pre-) and again at the end of the semester (post-). The survey asked general questions pertaining to the educational objectives. These general questions were asked of all students in the five courses. Then to gauge if students were able to improve their particular knowledge within a discipline, the survey asked students to answer only those questions pertaining to the introductory course they were taking. At the semester's end, the same questions that were asked in the pre –survey were asked in the post-survey.

To administer the survey a link to the survey was provided within each class's Angel shell and students were asked to complete it via Survey Monkey. In all the introductory courses within the Department, 257 students completed the first survey (pre-) and 139 students completed the second survey (post-). The survey was open for 2 weeks at a time and students were directed by their faculty to do the survey during each administration. The Department Chair opened and closed each administration and compiled the results of the data for review and comment by each Director within the program.

Indicate when assessment(s) will take place:

The survey administration took place during the first two weeks of the semester and the last two weeks of April.

Criteria/Benchmark(s) for assessing students' progress in meeting the exemplary objective(s) selected:

70% of the students in the introduction courses need to correctly answer the questions.

Section II: Analysis of Results

What were the results attained?

Describe the primary results or findings from your analysis of the information collected. This section should include an explanation of any strength(s) or weakness(es) suggested by the results.

Students in the Behavioral Sciences Department's Introduction to Criminal Justice, Introduction to Psychology and Introduction to Sociology were asked to participate in the core assessment survey in Spring 2011. Slightly more than half (54%; 139/257) of students completed the second (post) survey at the end of the semester with 41% of criminal justice introduction students (n=30), 86% of psychology introduction students (n=101) and 12% of sociology introduction students (n=8) completing the post survey. Because not every student completed both surveys, the results of the survey should be read cautiously.

When comparing the pre and post survey results, the introduction students in all the courses indicated that they better understood the core objectives/ materials by the end of the semester. With the exception of question 7 (can the student write a clear research question), more than 70% of the Department's students answered that they could do or understand the core concepts for the discipline by the end of the semester.

1. Do you know what appropriate research methods can be used to study the human condition in __?
Pre: 48% Yes Post: 78% Yes Improvement of 30%
2. Do you know the various ways in which technology can be used to study the human condition in __?
Pre: 52% Yes Post: 70% Yes Improvement of 18%
3. Do you understand what data can be collected to study the human condition in _:
Pre: 61% Yes Post: 84% Yes Improvement of 23%
4. Do you understand the basic social institutions and processes in the field of _:
Pre: 52% Yes Post: 75% Yes Improvement of 23%
5. Do you understand how the field of __ has changed across time?
Pre: 65% Yes Post: 87% Yes Improvement of 22%
6. Do you understand the impact of social and cultural change on the field of __?
Pre: 66% Yes Post: 86% Yes Improvement of 20%
7. Can you write a clear research question for a study in the field of __?
Pre: 39% Yes Post: 67% Yes Improvement of 28%
8. Can you find relevant literature for writing a research paper in the field of __?
Pre: 62% Yes Post: 78% Yes Improvement of 16%

9. Do you know the history and evolution of the field of ___ by describing the important work of important theorists?

Pre: 35% Yes Post: 79% Yes Improvement of 44%

10. Can you explain changes in society and how this affected dominant schools of thought in the field of ___?

Pre: 44% Yes Post: 71% Yes Improvement of 27%

11. Can you name at least one important figure in the field of ___?

Pre: 57% Yes Post: 85% Yes Improvement of 28%

We also asked students within each course to answer specific questions that students in the course should learn or understand as the material pertains to a particular subject.

Introduction to Criminal Justice students were asked multiple choice questions which included materials covered throughout the semester. These questions were highly specific and required students to carefully read choices.

1. The US has a dual court system which means that: 38% correctly answered the question by the end of the semester.
2. What is a challenge of cause: 22% correctly answered the question by the end of the semester.
3. Which is NOT one type of status offense: 29% correctly answered the question by the end of the semester.
4. One limitation to the findings generated by UCR data on arrest rates is that: 73% correctly answered the question by the end of the semester.
5. What school of criminology does the concept of atavism belong to: only 32% correctly answered the question by the end of the semester.
6. The state seeks retribution against an offender, the purpose of punishment is: 48% correctly answered the question by the end of the semester.
7. One or more arguments in favor of plea bargaining is that plea bargaining: 23% correctly answered the question by the end of the semester.

Introduction to Psychology students were asked multiple choice and ranking questions. The questions are ones that pertain to the first third of the semester materials. These questions required students to remember very specific knowledge about the brain and field of study.

1. Psychology is the study of: 94% correctly answered the question by the end of the semester.
2. Whereas Structuralists question the ___ of the mind, Functionalists were interested in the ___ of mental processes: 42% correctly answered the question by the end of the semester.
3. Which part of the brain is the largest: 33% correctly answered the question by the end of the semester.
4. The reception of stimulation from the environment is ___ and the organization, interpretation and understanding of stimulation is ___: 63% correctly answered the question by the end of the semester.

5. A researcher who wants to establish evidence for a cause-effect relationship between variables should use: 55% correctly answered the question by the end of the semester.
6. Scaling how well the students thought they understood various concepts by the end of the semester: 59% would give themselves an A or a B for understanding the biological basis of behavior; 47% would give themselves an A or a B for understanding the situational factors that influence behavior; and, 77% would give themselves an A or a B for understanding the social and cultural influences on the definition of abnormal behavior.

Introduction to Sociology students were asked multiple choice questions. These questions pertain to specific concepts about society and theories in the field of study.

1. Researchers doing _ research avoid time and expense of collection their own data: 15% correctly answered the question by the end of the semester.
2. Symbolic interactionism emphasizes that: 67% correctly answered the question by the end of the semester.
3. Contemporary Marxist theories believe that the main source of social problem(s) is: 44% correctly answered the question by the end of the semester.
4. A society is in a state of “anomie” when: 25% correctly answered the question by the end of the semester.
5. Socially defined rules of behavior are: 67% correctly answered the question by the end of the semester.

It appears that when generally asked about the state of their knowledge in regard to the methods, social institutions and processes to study social behavior, the students in the core class indicate that they do have a strong basis of knowledge about the field since entering the course. The introduction students indicated that they knew how to employ specific methodology in the study of criminal justice, psychology and sociology. The students also indicated that they understood the basic historical and social institutions that they were studying. When asked specific questions about the discipline that they were studying, many students did not answer the questions correctly.

What were the conclusions reached?

Include a brief description of the procedure used for reaching the conclusion(s) based on the evidence collected and describe the process used to disseminate the information. Use the Meeting Minutes template found at: <http://www.tamtu.edu/adminis/iep/resources.shtml>. Once completed, submit the minutes to integrate@tamtu.edu.

The Behavioral Sciences Department is cautious about the conclusions that can be drawn from this core curriculum assessment. We have more confidence in the positive results observed between the pre- and post-survey results on the general questions asked of all introduction students since the number of students completing the all the questions were substantial (over 100). But, since the number of students taking the post-survey assessment within each program was low as compared to the number of students in the courses, we cannot be sure that the scores on the questions for each individual program is accurate or easily explained. That is, if Sociology had only 8 students taking the post-survey and 3 incorrectly answered a question, then they had 63% responding correctly; it is hard to make assumptions about course quality based only on an

N of 8. Similar precautions are advised for analyzing the results from the other two program's specific curriculum based questions.

Several other observations might be made about the differences found in the pre- and post-survey results. Because the majority of the students are freshman (51% pre, 47% post), the students may not have developed their study habits sufficiently. The post survey was given as the Spring semester is winding down and student fatigue (spring fever) may be diverting them from their studies. In short, they may not have been sufficiently focused on doing well on a survey for which they were not graded and had no incentive to take seriously. One student told a Psychology faculty member that since the chapters were too long, the student did not want to read them. Nonetheless, the Behavioral Sciences Department believes that the introductory courses are important because they lay the foundation for active engagement within the disciplines, provide important learning outcomes for students within the State of Texas and each program has to ensure students are retaining specific knowledge within its core curriculum offerings. Faculty teaching the Introduction courses will need to encourage active engagement by each student with the intense amount of material covered in the course.

Describe the action plan formulated.

Based on the conclusion(s), describe the action plan to be implemented to improve or maintain student learning in the core academic discipline, including a timeline for implementation.

The Behavioral Sciences Department will engage in several distinct changes to the Introduction courses, some of these changes are in regard to the assessment process and the other is in regard to the instructional process.

First, when performing assessment, the faculty must make sure that students know that the assessment is going to take place and that each student has to participate. They will not be given the questions, but will know that it is an important part of the classroom experience. In order to improve the assessment process, faculty will work with OIT (Office of Instructional Technology) to come into each class on an assigned day to implement the pre- and post-surveys using the "clicker" system. Importantly, the faculty member can use the in-class examination/survey as an instructional opportunity, students can be shown the number of students who answered correctly and incorrectly after the assessment questions were administered. The faculty member can then instruct the students about the correct response and begin to provide information that will be disclosed over the term to peak the students' interest. Faculty can also decide if they will give extra credit points to students who attend both sessions of the survey administration. The results will then be sent to the Department Chair. As with this year's assessment, the same instrument will be administered at the beginning and end of the semester. Each assessment instrument will ask general and specific questions about the discipline.

Second, the faculty should attempt to make sure that they repeat concepts and ideas throughout the course. It is through repetition that students will understand the connection between concepts; such repetition is aimed at ensuring that the introduction courses provide a bridge to important topics covered within the course and that the students will encounter in the upper division classes. In this regard, students must be encouraged to read their textbooks and be given

appropriate feedback on how to dissect the important concepts, theories, methods and materials from the discipline. Textbooks are expensive and some students delay in purchasing them, however, they provide the depth of material that cannot be fully discussed in class and academic learning also requires student learning outside the classroom.

Third, faculty have to make sure that the classrooms in which they teach are of adequate size so that when they address the students, the students can hear them and participate. The Department's introductory courses generally have very large enrollments and it is important to make sure that students continue to be engaged throughout the semester. Some classes were in large theaters and provide additional challenges for instruction.

Implementing these actions requires the Department's Directors to work with faculty teaching the core curriculum courses so that assessments are taken seriously by students so that the results and analysis can be reliable. Because of the lower number of students taking the post-survey, the post-survey results should be read with caution.

Section III: Resources

Resource(s) to implement action plan:

Describe the resources that will be needed to implement the action plan. Also indicate if the resources are currently available, or if additional funds will be needed to obtain these resources.

Funding

- New Resources Required
- Reallocation of current funds

Physical

- New or reallocated space

Other

- Primarily faculty/staff time
- University/rule procedure change only

Provide a narrative description and justification for requested resources (include linkage to Strategic Plan)

PHYSICAL -New or Reallocated Space: Classes need enough space to adequately serve all enrolled students, but should not be in too large a room that students will spread out (this happened in CRIJ 1301 and students in Spring 2011). Classroom size is hard to predict, though, the Introductory courses are by their nature large and allocation of classrooms needs some attention from the Chair, the College and the Registrar's office – we need to work together to ensure appropriate seating.

OTHER – Primarily faculty/staff time: To ensure that students are focusing on the materials, it is important to make sure that students have their textbooks at the beginning of the semester. In addition, faculty will need to work with OIT to schedule the assessments. These testing times

should be arranged so that students are adequately notified that they must be in class and take the assessment survey. Faculty should also monitor themselves and their presentations/discussions to ensure that key terms and ideas are repeated throughout the semester so that students learn important concepts, identify critical theories and are able to utilize various methodologies covered within a semester.

Date Report Submitted:

May 9, 2011