

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

Core Curriculum Academic Discipline: BEHAVIORAL SCIENCES

Assessment Period Covered: Sept. 1, 2011 to May 31, 2012

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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.

Last year the social science faculty that teach courses in American National Government, PSCI 2305, and Texas State government, PSCI 2306 assessed the following learning objectives.

3. To use and critique alternative explanatory systems or theories.

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.

The conclusions reached by the social sciences faculty were as follows. Average students performance improved by approximately 17 percentage points from a pre-test to post-test. These results were about equal to or slightly better than our expectations. The program concluded that increased faculty participation was need in an effort to give the results better validity.

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.

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.

☐ **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.

Students will be asked to respond to an online pre/post survey using SurveyMonkey for PSCI 2305 and PSCI 2306. The survey question seeks to elicit what kind of political participation students take part in and to what degree. The pre and post survey seeks to gauge what impact the course has had on students' civic awareness and responsibility.

Indicate when assessment(s) will take place:

Within the first two weeks of Spring 2011 and during the final two weeks of Spring semester.

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

There will be an increase of 15% in students survey scores from the pre to post test on this outcome.

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 Social Research and Public Affairs Department's PSCI 2305 and PSCI 2306 were asked to participate in the core assessment survey in Spring 2011. Of the students who completed the pre-survey (n=428), 43% of students went on to complete the post-survey (n=184). Because not every student completed both surveys, the results of the survey should be read cautiously.

Initially, a 15% benchmark was set to assess students' growth from pre- to post-survey. That benchmark was not met in each course and overall. However, the benchmark was set prior to the construction of the survey. As such, the 15% benchmark does not serve as a valid indicator of whether the desired improvement was actually met.

The survey was constructed in such a way as to measure increasing levels of political participation from pre-to post-survey. In addition, the survey measured conventional to unconventional levels of participation, anticipating that the level of participation will increase at a smaller rate from conventional to unconventional levels of participation. The data supports this expectation. However, there was no basis on which to speculate how much participation would increase in each course and across levels of participation. Thus, a second benchmark was not proposed. The data provided in this survey provides baseline indicators from which we will create a benchmark in the future. Below we provide the distribution of participation scores for each course across different levels of participation.

PSCI 2305

Conventional Participation

Register to vote?

Pre:71% Post: 79% Change: +8%

Vote?

Pre:63% Post: 70% Change: +7%

Watch a political debate between candidates on TV or the Internet?

Pre: 57% Post: 65% Change: +8%

Read a political blog?

Pre:32% Post: 54% Change:+25%

Read about politics or candidates or elections in a newspaper or news magazine?

Pre:57% Post:69% Change:+12%

Average Change: +12%

Advanced Political Participation

Write and email or a letter to a public official?

Pre:15% Post: 20% Change:+5%

Donate money to a political campaign, candidate, interest group?

Pre:12% Post:27% Change:+15%

Attend a campaign rally or event?

Pre:30% Post: 52% Change:+22%

Donate time to a political cause or candidacy?

Pre: 26% Post:44% Change:+18%

Display a political poster, bumper sticker, or sign?

Pre: 36% Post:59% Change:+23%

Average Change: +17%

Unconventional Political Participation

Sign a petition?

Pre: 49% Post: 61% Change: +12%

Participate in a peaceful protest or demonstration?

Pre: 35% Post: 38% Change: 3%

Do you write your own or contribute to any political blogs?

Pre: 20% Post: 24% Change: 4%

Average Change: +6%

PSCI 2306

Conventional Participation

Register to vote?

Pre: 75% Post: 78% Change: +3%

Vote?

Pre:66% Post: 68% Change: +2%

Watch a political debate between candidates on TV or the Internet?

Pre: 56% Post: 75% Change: +19%

Read a political blog?

Pre:30% Post: 49% Change:+19%

Read about politics or candidates or elections in a newspaper or news magazine?

Pre:63% Post:79% Change:+16%

Average Change: +12%

Advanced Political Participation

Write and email or a letter to a public official?

Pre:19% Post: 20% Change: 1%

Donate money to a political campaign, candidate, interest group?

Pre:14% Post:35% Change:21%

Attend a campaign rally or event?

Pre:30% Post: 44% Change:14%

Donate time to a political cause or candidacy?

Pre: 25% Post:42% Change:17%

Display a political poster, bumper sticker, or sign?

Pre: 37% Post:53% Change:16%

Average Change: 14%

Unconventional Political Participation

Sign a petition?

Pre: 62% Post: 64% Change: +2%

Participate in a peaceful protest or demonstration?

Pre: 43% Post: 45% Change: 2%

Do you write your own or contribute to any political blogs?

Pre: 21% Post: 18% Change: -3%

Average Change: 0

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 Social Research and Public Affairs Department is cautious about the conclusions that can be drawn from this core curriculum assessment. However, pre- to post-survey results show a marked increase in conventional and advanced political participation in both PSCI 2305, and 2306. Interestingly, there was a larger than expected positive measure of conventional political participation in the pre-survey. It was not expected that more than 50% of students would be planning to register to vote and to then vote. We have to take into consideration the effect of supplying the socially correct answer to these types of questions, which are undergirded by ideas of civic duty. At the same time, these students are being exposed to both new and more complex information about politics, campaigns, media, and the role of citizens, which may be motivating them to become informed and participate in local and national politics. In addition, intermediary variables might have affected these results such as, increased media exposure regarding election during the Republican primaries. During the semester the College Democrats organization was also started; late in the spring semester this group began a “register to vote” campaign on campus, which might have affected the results of the survey.

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 Social Research and Public Affairs Department will attempt to increase coordination efforts across sections of PSCI 2305 and 2306 in the implementation of pre and post surveys. This spring, faculty were given the option to choose how to implement the surveys in their classroom. They also used different incentives to have students complete the surveys. Streamlining the delivery system of these surveys across all sections will be considered in order to improve participation and reduce the burden placed on faculty who had not planned on introducing the survey when designing the course.

The survey questions will be vetted in order to determine whether rewording or asking different questions might be better measures of outcome #11. The Department will make these changes in time for the next assessment. In addition, faculty might want to introduce a specific project into their class that has as its purpose 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.

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)

Outcome #11 is prescriptive and demands that young students make powerful realizations about the meaning of citizenship in a short amount of time. To that end, faculty would be required to increase the sophistication and student's qualitative experience of this introductory course. However, this requires much smaller class sizes than are currently offered. Capping PSCI 2305 and 2306 at 60 students would help increase the ability to deliver more in depth instruction.

Date Report Submitted:

May 2, 2012