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

Core Curriculum Academic Discipline: <u>COMMUNICATION</u>

Assessment Period Covered: <u>May 31, 2011to May, 31 2012</u>

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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:
<u>*Imperative 3: Teaching and Learning*</u>*-- Enhance the educational environment by promoting excellence in teaching and learning*.

<u>**Institutional Mission**</u>

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.

<u>**Core Curriculum Mission**</u>

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.

Overall, measured success has been attained throughout the ENGL 1301/1302, SPCH 1311, and MATH 2371. The results of the 2010 ENGL 1301 and 1302 showed the following: Students' writing proficiency, as measured by diagnostic and terminal essay comparative data, has steadily improved each academic year from 2008-2009 to 2009-2010. This growth is particularly noticeable in two categories: *focus* as well as *organization and development* of students' written products. Based upon these results, the writing program curriculum is successful. In the SPCH 1311 course, the primary results and findings of the tests suggest that the students did increase their overall proficiency in communication. Students post- test scores compared to pre-test scores are notably higher. Assessment findings for MATH 2371 proved were multifaceted. With regards to outcome 5, in average students perform at or near the benchmark, with 68% of them reaching it. The lowest point is Critical Thinking in the Development of Argument. Although the average is low, it is to be expected, since we cannot expect students will fully reach this point to the level it was assessed in a first course about communication in Mathematics, since students have not had all the experience in the subject that is necessary to make all connections to other areas in Mathematics.

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

COMMUNICATION

1. To understand and demonstrate writing and speaking processes through invention, organization, drafting, revision, editing, and presentation.
2. To understand the importance of specifying audience and purpose and to select appropriate communication choices.
3. To understand and appropriately apply modes of expression, i.e., descriptive, expositive, narrative, scientific, and self-expressive, in written, visual, and oral communication.
4. To participate effectively in groups with emphasis on listening, critical and reflective thinking, and responding.
5. To understand and apply basic principles of critical thinking, problem solving, and technical proficiency in the development of exposition and argument.
6. To develop the ability to research and write a documented paper and/or to give an oral presentation.

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.

2.   To understand the importance of specifying audience and purpose and to select appropriate communication choices.

4.   To participate effectively in groups with emphasis on listening, critical and reflective thinking, and responding.

☐ **Please indicate if the outcome(s) is (are) related to writing (*Write On, TAMIU!*). Although none of the courses used for assessment are WIN courses, the courses do included writing components. Therefore these courses do align themselves with the universities strategic plan and QEP.**

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.

Because there are a variety of courses and academic disciplines being used to access Student Learning Outcomes (SLO) #2 and #4 there are several instruments being employed to inform this portion of assessment. In order to assess Objective #2 ENGL 2311 will use a rubric to critique student proposals. COMM 1315 will use a Likert Scale Survey. To assess Objective # 4.   ENGL 1302 will use a peer-to-peer assessment and a group evaluation survey. COMM 1311 will be using a pre/post-test to assess Objective # 4.

Indicate when assessment(s) will take place:

All assessment will take place in either Fall 2011 and Spring 2012

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

All benchmarks used in assessment are discipline specific. In regards, to SLO # 2 (Audience) in

ENGL 2311 The benchmark for assessment was that at least 80% of students would have a cumulative average score of 2.5 or higher on the assessment rubric. In regards, to SLO #2 (Audience) in COMM 1315 the benchmark for assessment was that the enrolled students would have a cumulative average of at least %80 or higher based upon the assessment Likert scale survey. In regards, to SLO #4 in ENGL 1302 The benchmark for the Post-Survey and Peer-to-Peer assessments was that at least 80% of students would meet or exceed the "expected results" of faculty. In regards, to SLO #4 in COMM 1311 faculty created five different subcategories of assessment. The benchmark for assessment was that the enrolled students would achieve at least a cumulative average score of .8 (scales ranges from 0.0 -1.0) within each subcategory of the assessment rubric.

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.

To measure SLO# 2 To understand the importance of specifying audience and purpose and to select appropriate communication choices. Two separate courses were assessed. In ENGL 2311, instructors used a special rubric for assessing the Proposal assignment, analyzing student writing in three areas: Audience, Purpose, and Rhetorical Choices. The scores range from 1.0 (lowest) to 4.0 (highest). Instructors randomly selected at least 30% of the writing products in each section of ENGL 2311 and recorded the assessment scores of students' Proposal assignment. Of the 57 students assessed, 48 students scored a cumulative average score ≥ 2.5, indicating that 84.2% of students met or exceeded the benchmark. The average scores within each criterion for these 48 students are as follows: Audience = 3.34, Purpose = 3.35, Rhetorical Strategy = 3.42.

In COMM 1315, data was collected from one selected public speaking course. The course was chosen because it yielded the highest sample size and more conclusive data. Data was gathered employing direct measures, specifically a Likert Scale Survey. The average scores were computed by (1) comparing the combined student's responses with the appropriate instructor selected responses and (2) combining the overall student responses. The possible scale of the averages range from 0%-100%. The benchmark for assessment was that enrolled students would achieve at least a cumulative response score of 80% within each category of the Likert Scale Survey. Students were expected to answer 10 questions that specifically dealt with the SLO# 2 based upon 5 subcategories including: Invention, Disposition, Style, Memory, and Delivery.

Likert Scale Responses	S.1 (Invention)	S. 1 (Disposition)	S. 2 (Style)	S.3 (Memory)	S. 2 (Deliv
Benchmark	80%	80%	80%	80%	80%
Response Averages	41.15%	41.35%	90.85%	64.36%	29.45%

To measure SLO#4 to participate effectively in groups with emphasis on listening, critical and reflective thinking, and responding. In ENGL 1302 students are required learn to work collaboratively for their Ethnographic Essay assignment. Faculty members discussed using this assignment as the base for assessment of SL#4.   In groups of no more than three (3) students, groups follow a research plan, collect and share research, and compose an essay utilizing the writing process (i.e., invention, drafting, revising, editing, and submitting a final product) . Based upon this assignment, students were assessed using two instruments. The direct instrument was the Pre/Post assessment survey and the indirect instrument was the Peer to Peer Assessment survey. The initial purpose of a Pre-/Post-Survey was to see if, in general, the curriculum led to any significant change in how students viewed group work before and after having instruction and experience. The nature of the Peer-to-Peer Assessment is more complicated because of the nuanced questions and responses. The purpose of this instrument was to elicit further information about the extent to which students applied their understanding of group work in the course. In developing the assessment instruments, faculty determined that there were six categories of effective group work—Key Skills, Group Work in a Writing Class, Collaborative Writing, Research Procedures, Interpersonal Relations, and Ethical Aspect. The benchmark for the Post-Survey and Peer-to-Peer assessments was that at least 80% of students would meet or exceed the "expected results" of faculty by providing the appropriate responses to survey/assessment prompts. Results of the Post Survey share the following:

Post Survey Responses	Group Work in a Writing Class:	Collaborative Writing:	Research Procedures:	Interpersonal Relations:	Ethical As
Benchmark	80%	80%	80%	80%	80%
Response Averages	42.5%	86.52%	87.85%	80.43%	87.32%

Results of the Peer to Peer assessment share the following:

Peer to Peer Responses	Collaborative Writing:	Research Procedures:	Interpersonal Relations:	Ethical Aspects:
Benchmark	80%	80%	80%	80%
Response Averages	66.93%	66.07%	75.75%	73.84%

In COMM 131l, to measure SLO#4 data was collected from two randomly selected courses.

Both courses were taught by different instructors. Data was gathered employing direct measures, specifically pre and post assessment exams. The average score was computed by dividing the total points earned by the total points available. The averages were then scored to reflect the combined efforts of both courses. The sliding scale of the averages range from 0.0-1.0. Less than 0.5 medians are Below Average/Unsatisfactory. 0.6 medians are average and medians greater than 0.7 are above average. The benchmark for assessment was that enrolled students would achieve at least a cumulative average score of 0.8 within each subcategory of the assessment rubric. Students were expected to answer 20 questions that specifically dealt with the SLO# 4 based upon 5 subcategories.

Exams	S.1 (Effective participation)	S. 2 (Effective listening)	S. 3 (Critical thinking)	S.4 (Reflectivity)	S. 5 (Helpf response)
Pre-Exam	.43	.54	.46	.53	.5
Post-Exam	.93	.96	.89	.88	.88

The collected data affirms general growth in all subcategories. Prior to completing the 1311 course students had limited knowledge in all five categories. The pre- exam data highlights that students seemed to have the most difficult time gauging how to effectively participate is groups. Below Average medians are <0.6, therefore the pre-exam data proves that enrolled students had unsatisfactory performance in all areas of group performance. Post-exam medians are >0.6 therefore, proving that after course completion student knowledge about group performance had increased. Post-exam medians are >0.8 therefore, proving that assessment benchmarks were within each subcategory of assessment. Students proved to have an above average understanding of critical thinking, reflectivity, and helpful response. Post-Exam data further suggests that students have very a strong awareness of effective listening and participation within groups. We can understand that at course completion students were able to have an above satisfactory understanding of all five components of group performance including: effective participation within groups, effective listening within groups, critical thinking within groups, being reflective within group and providing helpful response within groups. While overall data has shared positive information, there is a major concern that the assessment instrument only gathered data that accessed students' knowledge of productive and positive group performance, but failed to access students comprehensive abilities within groups. We strongly feel that students know what makes a group successful, but we failed to measure if students perform in a manner that allows for optimal group success. Overall, faculty affirms that SLO #4: To participate effectively in groups with emphasis on listening, critical and reflective thinking, and responding is met within the 1311 course. Overarchingly, the assessment results in regards to SLO#2 yield diversified results. Within the ENGL 2311 students were able to achieve a desired understanding of what dictates and how to display appropriate communication choices however, students within COMM 1315 proved to have limited understanding of appropriate communication choices. Although, nuances within the assessment may be a factor that weighed upon the data from the course. In regards, to SLO#4 assessment data again yields varied results, however we can support the premise that students have a strong understanding of the basic dynamics of functional

group membership.

What were the conclusions reached?
Include a brief description of 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.tamiu.edu/adminis/iep/resources.shtml. Once completed, submit the minutes to integrate@tamiu.edu.

Overall, the 2011/12 communication assessment proves that TAMIU students have a limited understanding of appropriate communication choices. Students are likely affected by multiple messages and audiences they must consider on a daily basis. Several factors including but not limited to: language diversity, multiple disciplinarian approaches, and different learning experiences may cause our students to have a difficult time deciding on what is an "appropriate communication" choice. Overall, TAMIU students have a solid understanding of what it takes to participate effectively within a group. However, assessment data proves that this knowledge does not always translate into student's group experiences. Students may have the tools to succeed within groups, but students may choose not to engage in those tools.

In regards to SLO#2, the ENGL 2311assessment data indicates that students are have an above average understanding of specifying audience, purpose and appropriate communication choices and therefore, SLO #2 is being met within the course. Students had a slightly better understanding of appropriate rhetorical choices than others areas of assessment. The COMM 1315 assessment data indicates that students are limited in their understanding of specifying audience, purpose and appropriate communication choices. Multiple variables may be considered when analyzing the data. One major issue is the limitations of the Likert Scale survey and the medium of assessment. Further discussion conveyed concerns with the assessment instrument which limited student's interaction and may have influenced the interpretation of the student's conceptual and applicable knowledge.

In regards to SLO#4, within ENGL 1302 the post survey areas where students met the benchmark were: Collaborative Writing, Research Procedures, Interpersonal Relations and Ethical Aspects. However, students' failed to meet the benchmarks in the peer-to- peer assessment. Although, strong points in assessment include Interpersonal Relations students have a difficult time dealing with Collaborative Writing. The Post-Survey data reveal that students' had a difficult time understanding the importance of group work in a writing class, for only 42.5% of the students met the benchmark. Students may have difficult time writing collaboratively because no actually classroom lesson focuses on explicitly teaching HOW to write collaboratively other than getting students to sit next to each other—in the classroom—to work on the essay. The program needs to consider pedagogical methods in teaching how to teach writing in groups. Students may have had an easier time understanding the significance of Interpersonal Relations and Research procedures because course instructors provide ample opportunities for students to engage each other. The emphasis on research in ENGL 1302, from a curricular point of view, also allows ample opportunities for instructors to teach and re-teach research techniques. Assessment data also suggests that there is a disconnection between *what*

students understand (survey) is important and *how they apply strategies* (peer-to peer) in practice. It appears that students need more guidance in how these specific and overlapping areas of effective group work are linked to SLO #4. Generally, instructors need to be explicit about collaborative writing methods and have students practice this more in the classroom as well as outside of the classroom. Overall, instructors agreed that the program's pedagogy and curriculum have a cumulative effect on student progress in the other areas. COMM 1311 assessment data indicates that students are capable of understanding the multiple components of effective group participation. However, assessment data fails to absolutely indicate that students perform well within groups. Further discussion conveyed concerns with the assessment instrument which assessed conceptual and applicable knowledge, but failed to access group performance.

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.

Most faculty within the Communication component of the CORE believe that 2011/12 assessment proved that essential changes must be made to assessment tools, pedagogy, and curriculum plans. However, the overall positive findings of assessment affirm that progressive and theoretical approaches to teaching are present within our portion of the university core curriculum. Faculty across the disciplines has also discussed the possibility of creating interdisciplinary learning experiences. For example, some ENGL and COMM faculty have discussed designing cross-listed/combination/learning community Service Learning courses that would allow not only for triangulation, but repetition of important CORE concepts that will engage our students in life-long learning.

ENGL 2311 is currently undergoing a significant curriculum redesign for implementation in Fall 2012. The new curriculum places emphasis on discipline-specific audience, purpose, and rhetorical strategy that will continue to deepen students' understanding of specifying these criteria as they write in various disciplines to both experts in the field and to laypersons. COMM 1315 faculty contend that future assessment instruments should potentially include both direct and indirect methods of assessment. Further assessment may include a higher student sample. One of the larger issues presented by the assessment is that the students do not fully grasp audience analysis. Focus on audience analysis and audience centered issues will be a major consideration in future COMM 1315 course preparation and textbook selection.

ENGL 1302 faculty hypothesized that the weakness in actual application of strategies may be due to students' perception that "working well" with others and "liking others" are equivalents and that working individually is more important to complete a task than is resolving conflict and completing a task as a team. Faculty must guide students more explicitly in the application of principles so that students can "participate effectively in groups with emphasis on listening, critical and reflective thinking, and responding."   Faculty need to define "conflict," differentiating between true differences of opinion or methodology and likeability of group

members. Faculty also must address, more explicitly, strategies for resolving conflicts of both kinds and must monitor more closely "research procedures" and "ethical aspects," which are integral parts of critical and reflective thinking. Communication faculty will continue to include group activities within the 1311. Faculty believe group experience is integral in student learning as it prepares students for professional and academic success. Future assessment instruments should potentially include both direct and indirect methods of assessment. Further assessment may include a higher student sample. Future course evaluation and assessment could potentially focus on student performance within groups and students evaluation of group experience.

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.

At this time no one is requesting any new 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 (<u>include linkage to Strategic Plan</u>)

Date Report Submitted:

MAY 31, 2012