
Change coming to core

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Next year, the new core initiative may require fewer math courses to satisfy the “quantitative reasoning” requirement under the new draft of the core curriculum.

Quantitative reasoning, communication, critical thinking and empirical reasoning are just some of the objectives that will frame the new core curriculum, which will take effect in Fall 2014.

According to the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board’s website, the Undergraduate Education Advisory Committee developed recommendations to revise the Texas Core Curriculum, the first revision since the approval of the 42-credit-hour legislation mandated in 1998.

The new draft of the core curriculum, crafted by the Core Curriculum Review Committee, is based on feedback from students, faculty and discipline committees. It is now available online for review.

With the new curriculum revisions, there may be concerns throughout the district about cutbacks to the current 46- to 48-hour course workload.

“Some disciplines are concerned they will have to teach their courses in a three-credit hour format instead of a four-credit hour format,” Matt Hinckley, co-chair of the Core Curriculum Steering Team for the district, said. “Others want to ensure they remain in the core.”

The new framework requires each course within the curriculum to address at least three of the six total objectives, such as critical thinking and communication, as mandated by the state of Texas.

Reducing course hours may create strain on courses that require coordinated lab work along with lectures, such as biology or anthropology.

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“The lecture is fine, but the lab work is more hands-on,” Margarita Hernandez, a Brookhaven student, said. “Some professors have PowerPoints set up online, like on eCampus, so you can just go there and write your notes. But if they cut lab, it would hurt.”

Hinckley said the biggest difference between the old core and the new changes will be that some courses will have fewer options.

Also, fewer math courses will satisfy the curriculum requirements.

More math course pathways will likely open up for students. “Specifically, most students take college algebra at present. Within a few years, we likely will see more liberal arts majors take statistics to satisfy the math requirement,” Hinckley said.

Rodger Bennett, Core Curriculum Steering Team liaison, said he does not believe there will be a big difference with the new changes being implemented and expressed his positive views of the new core draft.

“I like the idea that it has a much tighter structure to it. Students have a much clearer picture in their 42 hours of what they need to accomplish,” Bennett said.

The new core curriculum, once implemented, will transfer in its entirety to any public college or university in the state.

Bennett said students will have demonstrated mastery of the six core objectives upon completing the new 42-credit-hour course load, “which I think is what the business world, the employers, are looking for,” Bennett said, “those skills.”

While these changes take effect Fall 2014, students who previously enrolled in courses in the Dallas County Community College District will still be able to complete the current core curriculum.

Regarding students pursuing the current core, Bennett said: “They’ll have options. It’ll be clearly laid out which direction they want to go. We will make sure the students won’t get caught in the crossfire.”

Bennett and Hinckley serve on the Core Curriculum Steering Team, which was implemented to create, plan and process what the district would do to revise the core.

The CCST is using the information it has collected from each campus in order to craft the final version for approval, which will be submitted to the THECB by November.

The current draft is now up for review on the www.dcccd.edu core resource website. Questions or comments about the new curriculum draft can be sent to Core2014@dcccd.edu.

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