Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi
SACS: Self-Study Report

3.4.10 The institution places primary responsibility for the content, quality, and effectiveness of the curriculum with its faculty. (Responsibility for curriculum)

Compliance Status: Compliance

Narrative

The faculty of Texas A&M University - Corpus Christi are responsible for the content, quality, and effectiveness of the curriculum, and that responsibility is evidenced both at the local college level and across the University. The Faculty Senate plays an important role at the University level, approving all new programs as well as reviewing the curriculum annually as part of the annual catalog cycle. As shown by the flow chart for graduate course approval in the supporting documents [1], the Graduate Council plays a similar role at the graduate level [2] [3] [4] [5] [6] [7] [8], and the newly formed Undergraduate Council [9] will do the same at the undergraduate level beginning in fall 2009 [10] [11] [12]. In each of the five colleges, curriculum committees oversee the implementation of programs and review the curriculum annually (examples of the review and of changes are provided below). Additionally, as documented in the responses to Principles 2.5 [13] and 3.3.1.1 [14], all degree and certificate programs are assessed for their effectiveness annually using WEAVEonline, a Web-based assessment tool. Moreover, all programs are reviewed on a scheduled periodic basis by external peers based upon a self-study written by the faculty within the department or program that involves a review of the content, quality, and effectiveness of the curriculum-these reviews are discussed in detail and samples are provided in the response to Principle 2.5 [13].

All degree programs are governed by Texas A&M University System (TAMUS) policies. System Policy 03.02 provides the Policies for the Establishment and Revision of Mission Statements and Tables of Programs [15]. System Regulation 03.02.02 specifies the Approval Procedures for Degree Programs, Administrative Changes, etc. [16]. Although these policies require that the Board of Regents approve new programs and substantive changes to programs, the ultimate responsibility remains at the local level in the hands of the faculty at A&M - Corpus Christi as set forth in University Procedure 03.02.02.C2.01, Development of New Courses and Catalog Revisions [17]. This University procedure specifies the role of the faculty in the curriculum review process and subsequent approval process by appropriate curriculum committees, department chairs, deans (or equivalents), the Faculty Senate, and the provost and vice president for academic affairs. The procedure establishes the parameters for the University-level review of catalog revisions and the review of new courses submitted outside of the catalog review cycle, and states that "[a]ll requests, both substantive and nonsubstantive, must be approved through the faculty curriculum review process of the relevant college ..." Section 2 of the procedure requires all substantive catalog changes pertaining to the educational program, which includes all curricular changes, be approved by the Faculty Senate and the provost and vice president for academic affairs prior to the printing of the University catalog.

The role of the Faculty Senate [18] is crucial in this approval and review process. As the Faculty
Senate Constitution states: "A university's foundation is its faculty. [19]" The Constitution further specifies that the Senate is responsible for "[t]he establishment of new policies, changes in existing policies and the interpretation of existing policies dealing with ... [e]ducational policy and planning of academic programs, curriculum, and instruction. [19]" The review and approval process is detailed in the Senate's Bylaws [20]. The Bylaws charge the Faculty Senate's Academic Affairs Committee to review "(1) curriculum and instruction [and] (2) Academic standards ..." All curricular changes must be approved by the Academic Affairs Committee, and then subsequently by the entire Faculty Senate membership. For example, on February 20, 2009, the chair of the Academic Affairs Committee reported on the changes in the curriculum for each of the five colleges, and the changes were approved by a vote of "16 for, 0 against, 0 abstentions. [10]" Minutes from four other senate meetings are included in the supporting documents as further proof of the faculty's responsibility for the content, quality, and effectiveness of the curriculum. The course addition form is also included to further demonstrate the steps in the process as well as the faculty's approval [21]. This form was recently revised to provide additional information about the course, including information about course objectives.

To further demonstrate the role of the faculty in these decisions, a brief description and supporting documentation of specific curriculum processes in each college and the core curriculum are provided below.

**College of Business:**
As detailed in the College of Business's memorandum regarding curriculum review [22], the curriculum review process occurs each year as an aspect of publishing the annual catalog. The process is initiated by the associate dean when the college receives guidelines for the submission of proposed changes from the provost's office. Proposed changes for individual courses are initiated by faculty responsible for such courses. Proposed changes for multiple sections are initiated by the course coordinator after consultation with others teaching the section course. All changes must be reviewed and approved by the respective departments and appropriate curriculum committee. Proposals are reviewed by the COB Administrative Council to address any interdepartmental conflicts and then forwarded by the dean to the appropriate Undergraduate or Graduate Advisory Committee chair for comprehensive review and recommendation for final approval or rejection by the dean. The committees' charges and membership are included in the supporting documents [23] as well as minutes from recent meetings at which the courses in the 2008 catalog were approved [24]. If a proposal is rejected, it is returned to the departmental chair with suggestions for resubmission or with reasons for denial. Proposals denied by the committee may be appealed to the dean. Proposals approved by the dean are forwarded to the provost who transmits them to the Faculty Senate for action—a sample approval form with the requisite signatures for Finance 3312 and Economics 3325 is available in the supporting documents [25]. Faculty developing the proposals may be asked to appear or to provide additional information to the senate as provided in the Faculty Senate guidelines.

**College of Education:**
The process for approval of new courses and changes is detailed in the "College of Education: Curricular Changes and Additions and Program Charts" memorandum [26]. Each proposed course is approved by the applicable department before being submitted to the College Curriculum Coordinating Committee responsible for coordinating overall course offerings for the
college for review and approval. The committee is made up of a representative from each of the six departments, a member at large, and the principal of the ECDC. The course must be submitted one week prior to the scheduled meeting. The committee's prerogative is to approve, disapprove, or approve with modifications. Minutes from the committee regarding the catalog, specific courses such as READ 5390 and 6390 and ETEC 53XX (a new course developed and added to the curriculum). Successful proposals approved by the dean are forwarded to the provost who forwards them to the Faculty Senate for action. Faculty developing the proposals make themselves available as necessary to provide additional information to the Faculty Senate.

**College of Liberal Arts:**
The process for curriculum change and approval is published in the College of Liberal Arts' Online Faculty Handbook. Program, course, and catalog changes usually originate from faculty in the various teaching areas using the "Proposal for New Course" form. Occasionally the dean or department chair originates changes to meet changing needs. Regardless of the originating party, all program, course, and catalog changes go through the following process. Proposed changes are first approved by discipline faculty and presented in writing to the department chair who reviews the proposal and suggests any advisable changes to the discipline faculty and the dean. The dean then submits the proposed change to the Curriculum Committee, which acts on the proposed change(s) using an approved checklist to assure the quality and effectiveness of the course and returns a recommendation to the dean. The dean places the recommended change on the agenda for faculty action in a faculty meeting. Course proposals receiving unanimous approval by the Curriculum Committee are considered automatically approved by the faculty and placed on the faculty meeting agenda as a point of information. Course proposals receiving a majority of support by the Curriculum Committee will be recommended to the faculty with the vote split published in the agenda. All changes are sent to the Faculty Senate via the office of the provost to be reviewed and approved as part of the annual catalog review process. Other colleges are advised of any recommendations affecting their curricula. The dean or his/her designate is responsible for ensuring that any approved changes are published and included in catalog revisions. If a negative action is taken at any step of the process, the process either reverts to the discipline faculty for revision or termination, or stopped altogether. The documentation for a new course, HIST 4342 The Holocaust, which replaced HIST 4342 Nazi Germany, is included in the supporting documents to demonstrate how faculty take responsibility for course content. Particular care is taken with graduate courses in the College of Liberal Arts to ensure that faculty are responsible for the content, quality, and effectiveness of graduate courses. A faculty member who gains faculty approval for their proposal to offer graduate credit for an undergraduate course retains that status as long as the course remains current and is taught by the faculty member whose proposal gained approval. Once approved, the course may be taught for graduate credit or not at the instructor's discretion with approval of the department chair. Other faculty members wishing to teach the course for graduate credit must submit individual proposals. All courses must be approved by the Faculty Senate.

**College of Nursing:**
The bylaws for the College of Nursing establish the process for overseeing the development of courses and assuring their quality and effectiveness. The College of Nursing has two curriculum committees, one composed of faculty who teach in the undergraduate department and the other composed of faculty who teach in the graduate department. The process for review of the courses is outlined in the faculty handbook. The undergraduate and graduate chairs in their respective
Curriculum committees conduct three reviews of the curriculum: the WEAVEonline assessment, the periodic peer review, and the curriculum copy. The WEAVEonline assessment of program curriculum is conducted after a summary of faculty input. After the chairperson collects and summarizes the data for WEAVEonline, a meeting is held with the respective departmental faculty to review the assessment report, its outcomes, and challenges. Plans are then created to address the findings. In the peer review, chairs and individual faculty review courses, student and peer evaluations in their individual courses. For example, the Graduate Department Committee reviewed NURS 5353 and 5354 [38] as part of a review of the nursing education minor that, in turn, was reviewed as a whole as part of a curriculum change plan [39]. The review and changes were accepted by the Faculty of the Whole on April 21, 2009 [40]. During this process, the nursing course objectives were evaluated by a Nurse Educator Subcommittee and changes were made based on the needs of students for clinical expertise and capstone experiences [41]. Utilizing data similar to that found in the aforementioned documents, faculty, along with the chair, maintain effective strategies and modify other areas. The undergraduate and graduate courses are examined regularly as faculty members prepare their courses. Faculty credentialed as experts in specialty areas lead other faculty through a review of course objectives to verify the curricula to continuously reflect the standards and guidelines of general and specialty nursing and health science practice. These reviews ensure program compliance with professional education standards. Additionally, faculty with the requisite knowledge, experience and credentials, as specified in the Texas Board of Nursing Rule 219 of the Texas Administrative code [42] and professional educational guidelines, are assigned leading roles in teaching specialty courses so that they can monitor student progress in achieving expected outcomes. In sum, faculty proposing course modification work with a task force of faculty to bring the changes to the undergraduate or graduate curriculum committee and eventually to the Faculty of the Whole for approval. The dean then forwards the changes to the provost, who sends the changes to the Faculty Senate for approval and subsequent University approval.

**College of Science and Technology:**
The Online Faculty Handbook contains the processes and guidelines for program, course, and catalog changes [43]. In most cases, such changes originate from faculty in the various teaching areas, but occasionally the dean, department chair, or the other colleges may be the originating source if necessary to meet changing needs. Changes may be made in response to changes in the academic discipline as revealed through program assessment, change in licensure, certification, or accreditation standards, or in response to other needs. For example, the WEAVEonline 2007-2008 Geology BS Program Assessment report [44] and the WEAVEonline 2007-08 Environmental Science MS Program Assessment Report) [45] led to significant changes: an added emphasis in practical experience and a more flexible curriculum respectively. Oversight for managing curricula issues resides with the dean; however, curricula origination and review responsibilities reside with the faculty. As such, all curricular change proposals, regardless of nature, are reviewed and approved by the respective department faculty. In the case of a new course, the faculty use the "Proposal for New Course/Elective" form that asks for specific information about the nature of the course and what requirements the course fulfills. A full syllabus must accompany the course. Sample proposal forms for a field geology course [46] and for an environmental science course [47] are provided in the supporting documents to demonstrate how quality and effectiveness of courses is ensured. The proposed changes are reviewed by the committee [48], which then sends its recommendations to the dean/associate dean, to the Graduate Council (if appropriate), and then to the provost. The provost forwards the proposals to the Faculty Senate for action. Minor curricula changes are
addressed through the annual University catalog revision process, which is discussed in more detail in the response to Principle 3.5.3 [49].

**Faculty Core Curriculum (FC3) Committee:**
Prior to being considered by the FC3 committee, proposals for modifying core curriculum must be approved by the sponsoring department(s) and the sponsoring college(s), evidence of which is provided by signatures of the appropriate officials on the Core Curriculum Proposal Cover Sheet [50]. In order to ensure the rigor, quality, and effectiveness of the core curriculum at A&M - Corpus Christi, the FC3 committee has developed extensive guidelines that faculty and departments use when initiating new courses or making changes [51]. The voting members of the committee consist of two representatives from each of the five colleges. Non-voting members include the associate vice president for academic affairs, the co-directors of the core curriculum programs, the director of the academic advising transition center, and a librarian. The committee elects the chair.

Proposals involving more than one core curriculum course (tetrads, triads, or other grouped courses) require the signatures of departmental/college officials to signify that coordination in the planning and development has taken place and that such cooperative efforts will continue through implementation, delivery, and management of the grouped courses. After receiving department/college approval, core curriculum proposals are formally submitted to the chair of the FC3 committee for consideration at an upcoming and regularly scheduled FC3 meeting. Core curriculum proposals must be in alignment with the overall objectives of the 45-hour Core Curriculum. A sample of the FC3 minutes involving core curriculum in Spanish and economics is included in the supporting documents [52].

Required documentation to be attached to the Core Curriculum Proposal Cover Sheet includes a statement identifying the nature of and a rationale/justification for the proposal, along with complete syllabus/syllabi for the course(s) involved. Specific information required on the syllabus/syllabi is detailed in A&M - Corpus Christi's process for submitting proposals to change [51]. For new core courses or planned linkages, proposals already approved at the department and college levels must be submitted to the chair of the FC3 committee on or before the first working day of October, which allows time for distribution of copies to FC3 members for consideration at a regularly scheduled committee meeting. The FC3 discusses the proposals and then the 10 faculty members on the committee vote either in favor of or against the proposal. If approved by the FC3 committee, the FC3 chair forwards the proposal to the provost's office which, in turn, forwards the proposals to the Faculty Senate for approval. The discipline proposing the core change is responsible for assessing the change in consultation with the co-directors of the Core Curriculum Program. Further discussion of ensuring the effectiveness of the core can be found in the response to Principle 3.5.3 [49].

**Conclusion**
In sum, at both the college and program levels as well at the broader University level, the faculty are actively involved in reviewing the content, quality, and effectiveness of the curriculum. By actively pursuing improvements in the curriculum, the faculty are taking full responsibility for the curriculum delivered by the instructors at A&M - Corpus Christi.