

TEXAS HIGHER EDUCATION COORDINATING BOARD
LEARNING TECHNOLOGY ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING
Academic Quality and Workforce Division
1200 E. Anderson Lane, Austin, Texas 78752

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Division of Academic Quality and Workforce
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Learning Technology Advisory Committee

March 26, 2021

10:00 AM – 2:30 PM

This meeting was held via video conference.

Members present: Justin Louder- Chair, Patrick Pluscht- Co-chair, Ruth Chisum, Ken Craver, Vicki Freeman, Rolando Garza, Mary Gentry, Michelle Giles, Robert Greene, Joyce Langenegger, Pamela Morgan, Elizabeth Rodriguez, Tim Snyder, Charlene Stubblefield, Yun Wan, Erin Warham, Julie Dellelo, Rita Fennelly-Atkinson, Jacqueline Mok, Carlos Morales

Members absent: Mark Garcia, Glynnis Gains, Lynda Murphy,

Staff present: Michelle Singh, Kyla Torre, Amy Zandy, Andrew Lofters, Jessica Acton

Guests: Claudia San Miguel (Texas A&M International), Sean Maddan (Texas A&M International), and Patricia Abrego (Texas A&M International)

Summary Notes

1. Welcome, introductions, and call to order – Dr. Justin Louder, LTAC Chair

Dr. Louder called the meeting to order at 10:00 am.

2. Consideration of summary notes from the December 4, 2020 meeting – Dr. Louder

A motion was made to accept the summary notes from the December 4, 2020 meeting by Mr. Patrick Pluscht and was seconded by Ms. Erin Warham. The motion was approved unanimously and the minutes for the December 4 meeting were accepted as submitted.

3. Discussion of the distance education delivery of Texas A&M International University's proposed Doctor of Philosophy (PHD) degree with a program in Criminal Justice, based on the LTAC's assessment of the application's compliance with THECB distance education rules and policy – Doctoral Proposal Subcommittee Members/Institutional Representatives - Dr. Louder

Dr. Jacqueline Mok provided a brief description of the request from Texas A&M International University to offer the PhD in Criminal Justice via a hybrid/blended online delivery. Dr. Mok invited Texas A&M University representatives to comment on the proposal.

Dr. Mok introduced Dr. Claudia San Miguel, Dr. Sean Maddan, and Dr. Patricia Abrego who provided an overview of the proposal.

On behalf of the subcommittee, Dr. Mok asked for an update regarding finding a replacement for Skype as a connectivity tool. Dr. Abrego clarified that Blackboard collaborate will be the number one way of connecting with students and that WebEx would be used as well.

Dr. Mok invited the Doctoral Proposal Subcommittee to ask any additional questions. There were none. Dr. Julie Delello asked about the three-hour difference between the 49-hour course load for those coming in with a master's degree and the 52-hour course load for those pursuing a doctorate. Dr. Maddan explained the difference is that a stats class to ensure those with legal training are prepared to advance to a doctoral level stats class.

Dr. Ruth Chisum asked what student support looks like from a technical perspective. Dr. Abrego explained that aside from the front desk, they have five full-time instructional designers and three part-time instructional designers. The program is QM certified and systematically provides assistance to their faculty members on both the design and actual delivery of the courses. One team member is always on call on weekends, and community members would respond if an issue escalated. They also utilize the app EZ Soft which is a self-help help desk that provides support to faculty and students.

Dr. Chisum asked what type of after-hours support is provided to the students. Dr. Abrego explained the point person is on call to assist both faculty and students. Ms. Miguel attested that the E Learning team is on call 24/7 and is very responsive to issues. Dr. Maddan added that overall, the students that are at the master's level have basic issues which faculty acts as the point person and can often fix the issue before it goes to IT.

Dr. Louder asked if they were planning on doing live captioning of their synchronous sessions and if they are recorded so students can later review the videos. Dr. Abrego explained they do not have live captioning at this time, but they do have Echo 360 which is a lecture capturing application that provides captioning as soon as the recording ends. The captioning is available 30-45 minutes after the recording ends. They do plan on providing live captioning in the future. She added that they do partner with a service that provides live captioning for students with accommodations.

Dr. Louder wanted to clarify that if a student misses his synchronous time, the video will be available later. Dr. Abrego stated that every single classroom at TAMU can broadcast their classes live. Faculty is trained to make the connection between Echo and Blackboard.

Dr. Charles Morales asked if Dr. Abrego could expand on their course revision process. Dr. Abrego stated that when faculty develop materials for a course, that course is available to any adjunct faculty teaching that same course. Faculty can make additions and changes if they do not alter the learning outcome. At the end of the semester, they reassess those changes and, if there is a need to recertify that course, it is sent back to A&M. Recertification expires after five years and the courses are usually redeveloped.

Dr. Mok asked what percentage of the program is going to be new course content at the doctoral level. Dr. Maddan stated 100 percent. Dr. San Miguel agreed that the classes will be 100% completely new. Dr. Abrego added that faculty members assigned to the program are A&M certified.

Ms. Rita Fennelly-Atkinson stated that once students go to the online delivery portion, they are still required to meet with faculty during years three and four. Those meetings are face to face and require out of town students to travel. She asked for clarification as to why the program had that requirement and did not offer an online option like other areas of the program. Dr. Maddan stated that the proposal was written before COVID and ideas have changed since then. If a student lives outside Laredo, a virtual meeting will be conducted. Those students that live in Laredo will have the option of face to face or virtual. He added that face to face is required for national and regional conferences, as well as when defending their portfolio or dissertation. Dr. San Miguel added that the University would be funding out of town students' travel to Laredo.

Dr. Joyce Langenegger requested clarification as to whether students need to pick up physical materials at the library, or if this has changed for distance students. Dr. San Miguel stated that this has been updated and faculty will be sure students receive needed materials.

Dr. Louder commented on the statement that 100% of the coursework is going to be brand new developed and asked what the timeline for that was. He also asked if faculty will be developing these classes as they are being taught. Dr. San Miguel responded that ideally the courses would not be developed as faculty is teaching the class. Once the program is approved, faculty would be asked to start development over the summer. Dr. Abrego added that they have a streamline process and right now they are working on a 14–16-week development plan. And currently, they have certain milestones. When a faculty member is assigned to an instructional designer, they work hand in hand to ensure that every one of those milestones is met so that at least an internal review will be done before the course is taught for the first time.

Dr. Maddan added that because of the complete startup there will not be any more than three classes started every semester for the first couple of years, and then by year three they are starting with the portfolios and then by year four or five they get into dissertations. Faculty will probably have one class prep in a year, not a semester.

Dr. Yun Wan asked if there are any other restrictions other than that the defense must be on campus. Dr. San Miguel responded that it is out of formality that the final defense of the dissertation would be defended in front of the committee. But if for some reason a student could not attend on campus, accommodations for a virtual defense would be made.

Dr. Maddan added that meeting with students at conferences was also going to be an avenue to have defenses.

Dr. Mok added that since going online, the attendance for dissertation defense has risen tenfold.

Dr. Mok asked if they were going to meet their start date or possibly lag to another future semester. Dr. San Miguel stated they are comfortable with a fall start date. She added that their office of public relations was ready in terms of marketing and recruiting and that there are not any major hurdles to start fall of 2021. Dr. Maddan added that the entire program has been loaded into the system and will show up in the fall catalog, depending on Board approval. Dr. Louder wanted clarification on whether a SACS change was needed, as that can take a long time. Dr. Mok added that the university would determine if that was necessary.

4. Consideration of recommendation for approval of the distance education delivery of Texas A&M International University's proposed Doctor of Philosophy (PHD) degree with a program in Criminal Justice, based on the LTAC's assessment of the application's compliance with THECB distance education rules and policy – Dr. Louder

A motion for approval was made by Justin Louder as a recommendation from the Doctoral Proposal Subcommittee. The motion was seconded by Mr. Daniel Gonzalez. The motion passed unanimously. Dr. Louder congratulated A&M for gaining LTAC approval and noted that the approval will move to the next level, the Coordinating Board.

5. THECB Updates - Dr. Dakota Doman, Ms. Elizabeth Mayer, Ms. Jessica Acton, Dr. Sheri Ranis, Mr. John Wyatt, Dr. Kylah Torre

- a. 60x30TX Refinement

Dr. Dakota Doman provided a brief overview of the 60x30TX refinements taking place. He reviewed the original 60x30TX goals, which were introduced in 2015, and then detailed the refined goals. Dr. Doman encouraged the committee to share their input.

- b. SB25

Ms. Elizabeth Mayer provided an update on Senate Bill 25 and the transfer effort. She provided an overview of SB 25 and its intent to help ensure that Texas students can make a seamless transfer. She then detailed the efforts of the Texas Transfer Workgroup which is committed to share responsibility and transparency through accountability.

- c. State Authorization Reciprocity Agreements (SARA)

Ms. Jessica Acton provided a brief overview of some proposed updates that will be going before the NC-SARA board in May. The first three policy modifications would be made to section 3.2 the SARA policy manual and that would essentially let states extend provisional status for institutions that have multiple changes and ownership or are under an ongoing investigation. The fourth recommended policy modification would be to sections 8.2 and 8.3 of the SARA policy manual and this ensures the NC-SARA staff treat all proposed policy modifications major and minor the same way. And it would also require individuals who submit recommendations for policy modifications to submit a rationale for that change as well. Ms. Acton also reminded members that the data reporting is approaching and should receive the link for the data reporting around May 15 and to contact SARA if the link is not received.

- d. Community College Baccalaureate Degrees

Dr. Sheri Ranis provided a brief update on the Community College Baccalaureate Degrees. She stated there is nothing new to report since the last meeting. She did mention potential legislative action that would allow all public junior colleges, to have up to five programs, but added that these changes have not gone to committee yet.

- e. Legislative Update

Mr. John Wyatt provided a legislative update. He stated the Senate Finance Committee and House Appropriations Committee are working on the additional federal monies that were recently

approved. Budget Bills HB1 and SB1 are moving through committees and will be forwarded to the Governor by May 31. The House Higher Education Committee has established Thursday mornings, as their hearing day and the Senate Higher Education Committee is meeting on Wednesday mornings. Committee members can watch these weekly hearings to see which bills are being heard in any given week. In a little over two months all legislation that has been passed will be sent to the governor for his signature.

f. Digital Learning

Dr. Kylah Torre gave an overview of the current initiatives at the THECB. Dr. Torre provided updates on State-funded and GEER-funded Grants, OERTX, and our partnerships with ISKME, DigiTex, and our Technical Assistance Partners. She then gave a summary of upcoming projects – OER Framework Support, Digital Learning Capacity Building Support, OER Core Element Academy, and OERTX Fest.

The committee took a 10-minute break and returned at 11:29 am.

6. Division of Digital Learning Strategy - Dr. Michelle Singh

Dr. Michelle Singh gave a brief overview of the Digital Learning Strategy. She shared the Division's Mission, the members of the team, and how the Coronavirus affected Digital Learning. Working remotely provided the opportunity to live in the world that digital learning students live in. She encouraged taking those experiences and using them to move quality digital learning forward. Dr. Singh gave an overview of Digital Learning in Texas.

Dr. Vicki Freeman asked if Dr. Singh could provide some specifics in terms of digital learning support. Dr. Singh responded that we want to increase awareness, build capacity, and recognize excellence through grants, academies, communities of practice, special interest groups, or bringing stakeholders together for dialogue. We are engaging with the UT School for Design and Creative Research so that we can hear from our students and from the ecosystem that supports digital learning, and those that were most greatly affected to determine what resources we need to design to empower them to move forward so it is evolving.

Dr. Freeman added that their students, particularly in the rural areas of Texas, struggle with access, and that we need to look at what can be done statewide to increase digital access. Dr. Singh replied that those conversations regarding the digital divide, access, and broadband equity are occurring throughout the state, within the legislature and within the coordinating board to figure out how to address this problem systematically.

Dr. Justin Louder added that the governor's broadband development Council issued a report to the legislature in November of 2020. In early March there were seven different bills filed dealing with statewide broadband and statewide broadband strategic planning. The discussion of a new broadband office has been brought up, but it is unclear where those bills stand but more information is available at the governor's website for the Governor's Broadband Development Councils report and there is a press release as well.

Dr. Ruth Chisum asked how to build hybrid faculty competencies and online education, and how we can work together to make faculty development programs accessible to all Texas institutions in support of building capacity?

Dr. Singh responded that the clearinghouse will be an area where we can work with institutions that have already perfected their programs and share those resources with institutions that may just be beginning or need to have a second set of eyes for best practices or how they enhance the creativity, or the level of their current program so we have different staffing at all different institutions. The Clearing House will have a calendar detailing the different events that are available all across the state.

Dr. Mok asked if the Coordinating Board will think differently about the span of higher education and the higher education landscape and integrate or look at the intersection of digital learning across the span of the Program. How do these ideas fit into the coordinating board's own structure?

Dr. Singh responded that the Coordinating Board has demonstrated its commitment to digital learning by creating the Division of Digital Learning. LTAC can provide valuable insight into building a solid foundation to support digital learning. Dr. Singh added that this is a conversation that will need to be continued.

Dr. Carlos Morales commented that file size and bandwidth availability are important aspects to consider in course design. Students have varying degrees of technological access and it is important to always keep that in mind in online education.

Dr. Singh responded that the Digital Learning Division's approach is to look at things through multiple lenses. She added that you cannot look at broadband as an isolated issue you have to look at all the other things that it is affecting, all of the other integrations. When talking about courses it is not just about course design, it is about leveraging the resources, staffing, and funding on campus. There are a lot of other multiple components to the work that we do. Community is what we want to strive for. It is more than a digital repository. It is more than just sharing documents back and forth. It is about talking to each other it is about connecting it is about engaging. We need to provide the avenues for conversation, for sharing of content and building on content that is already successful. That is how we can really capitalize on the knowledge that is already existing out there. We need resources. We know that institutions need resources to sustain this. We have GEER funding. that will provide an opportunity for you to build some capacity at your institutions. We need to invest where we want our success and where we want to find value. We are committed to support and partner with you to find out what does that look like and leverage the resources that we are given to amplify and share resources across the state.

Ms. Rita Fennelly-Atkinson commented that as a student she found it interesting to see the student experience unfold to the changes happening at the institutional level across multiple institutions. She is curious to see if there will be research that will focus on identifying the barriers and enablers that students had in persisting through their educational process. She knows there have been many students who have dropped out, taken a leave of absence, or chose to continue pursuing their education during this difficult time. Particularly for those who were working parents and who were working and were disproportionately affected. Many students work in the service industry and many of them lost their funding for their living expenses and even their college education. The pandemic affords us a unique situation where we have a broad view of new barriers and enablers for student success. Not only at the individual level, but at the institutional level, and even at the regional level when we start looking at rural versus urban. She then asked if there is an opportunity to explore students'

feelings about preferences for learning format and how that information could be used to build capacity for students to be successful in different types of learning environments.

Dr. Singh responded that we serve our students to be sure they reach their goals. Students need variety in their options, and they need to be informed and empowered to make those decisions best suited for their careers. The Coordinating Board is looking at high value credentials to re-skill up-skill. They are having conversations of not just attaining a full degree but also those credentials that can be gained along the way that will bring value now. People need to rejoin the workforce and need to reskill. The research engagement is focusing on being purposeful in making sure we hear from our students.

7. LTAC membership - Dr. Kylah Torre

Dr. Torre stated last year, because of the pandemic, we extended the membership terms until August 2021 for LTAC members who were supposed to roll off in 2020. We would like to continue to stagger terms with the committee, so everyone's terms do not expire at the same time. We are planning to extend all membership terms that would end this year for another year until the end of 2022. We would also extend the terms that are set to expire in 2022 until 2023. This would maintain the staggered roll off. We will be soliciting new membership for those who are going to roll off in 2021 and current members can always be renominated. The call for nominations will be sent to Chief Academic Officers and Chief Instructional Officers. We want to make sure everyone is okay with extending the 2021 terms to 2022 and the 2022 terms to 2023.

Dr. Mok restated Dr. Torre's comments requesting clarification which Kylah provided.

Dr. Louder added the LTAC roster is available on the coordinating board website for those who would like to check when their terms end. He also added that this is a Coordinating Board decision and is not a voting item for LTAC.

Dr. Torre clarified that this item will be going to the July Board meeting for approval.

7. Definitions and Standards Regarding Distance Education - Dr. Kylah Torre

Dr. Torre stated that we are revisiting the definitions for distance education as recommended by LTAC. To do this, we are creating a LTAC definitions and standards subcommittee that will be meeting during this meeting as well as separately. Ms. Elizabeth Rodriguez, Dr. Pam Morgan, Dr. Justin Louder, Mr. Patrick Pluscht, Ms. Charlene Stubblefield, Dr. Carlos Morales, and Dr. Jacqueline Mok have all emailed expressing interest to be part of this subcommittee. We are also considering adding some outside members to the subcommittee. Kylah asked that those interested in serving on this subcommittee contact her.

Dr. Justin Louder wanted to clarify that the subcommittee can have LTAC members, but there cannot be a quorum of LTAC members. Dr. Torre confirmed that was correct.

Dr. Louder added that if anybody is interested in serving on the subcommittee, they should email Dr. Singh or Dr. Torre after the meeting. Input from those who are not able to be part of the working group will still be solicited.

Dr. Louder stated the time was now 12:30pm and asked that the committee move ahead in the agenda to Item 10 Workgroup Sessions and Lunch and then circle back to Item 9 if there is time

at the end of the meeting. Dr. Singh and Dr. Torre will lead a conversation regarding some of the internal discussions we have had while the workgroups are being set up.

Dr. Torre started by telling the committee that the workgroup sessions would be used to determine some goals, priorities, and action items for the next year and if some topics of interests for the groups should sunset or change. Determine some goals and priorities for the next year for that group. We will come back together and talk about the future trajectory of the working groups as they are. Workgroups for this meeting will be the Inclusive Access group and the Survey group. The Definition subgroup will start soon, but not during this meeting.

Dr. Mok said she would be interested in what lessons the Coordinating Board learned in going fully remote. Dr. Torre agreed that is a conversation we need.

10. Workgroup Sessions and Lunch

The LTAC went on a break for lunch and breakout sessions for an hour. The Workgroups that are meeting included the Survey Workgroup and the Inclusive Access Workgroup.

11. Workgroup Session Reports

The LTAC returned from lunch at 1:28 pm.

Survey Workgroup: Mr. Patrick Pluscht reported that the workgroup had a great discussion regarding what is going on in their workplaces and plans for your team going back to campus. The workgroup would like to recommend this topic for an upcoming agenda item as a point of discussion. The conversation then turned to the survey. We are very pleased to share that we had 117 institutional responses from public and private institutions across Texas. This is a conservative response rate of about 71% considering 165 invitations were sent out. The qualitative part of the report is largely in place. The original default survey was 143 pages long. Mr. Pluscht reported that he has basically taken pieces one at a time, put them into excel spreadsheets, and created charts that are much more amenable to appearing in word. It is about 32 pages so far. Mr. Pluscht added that the raw report was 143 pages long over 20,000 words. It was suggested that the survey data would be helpful in framing the design study that UT will be doing. Dr. Mok commented that as we think about the new conversation and moving forward, we look at the questions we asked six years ago that are perhaps no longer relevant. Mr. Pluscht responded there was a trend analysis done in the second administration to see what changed in terms of responses between the first and the second. He would like to extend that to see what changed over the three administrations over the six-year period. Dr. Singh thanked Dr. Pluscht for leading the committee and spearheading this effort.

Dr. Singh added that the division is committed to looking at the results that we received from these surveys and the PR landscape survey to find the trends, differences, and underlying themes that have continued to persist and/or evolve into something else that is relevant today. This will help to ensure that we are looking to our past to guide our future in the process. The idea is to make sure that we do not look at digital learning, research, and data collection through only one lens. We want to see what those connection points are. Institutions should be able to see if their answers changed and what the differences are to see growth and change. Dr. Singh thanked the committee for its work on this project.

Inclusive Access Workgroup: Mr. Rolando Garza reported that Mr. Daniel Gonzalez is no longer with Alvin Community College so he will be co-chairing this group along with Ms. Charlene Stubblefield help. The Subcommittee would like to request a MS Teams folder be created for LTAC to share documents and information and continue conversations beyond our regular meeting dates. The subcommittee discussed inclusive access and cost saving analysis. Mr. Garza thanked Ms. Stubblefield for looking back at the feasibility study and the data that LTAC already has. The subcommittee will continue to review the study looking at textbooks, cost analysis, and inclusive access. Mr. Garza added that this group can build the groundwork, framework, and include the student voice.

Dr. Torre commented that a centralized place will be created for LTAC.

Dr. Singh commented that they will be working on focusing in on those key targets for the group – affordability and inclusive access. She also agreed with creating a centralized LTAC location for documents, information, and sharing.

Dr. Louder stated if there were not anymore questions the committee would go back to Item 9.

9. Review of December 4, 2020 discussion on COVID Responses from Campuses - Dr. Kylah Torre

Dr. Torre stated previous discussions included what the institutions were doing to support faculty. We saw that institutions who had digital learning initiatives in place before COVID had an easier transition than those who did not. Use of rubrics for quality is widespread as well as faculty certified courses. Students had a hard time across the board and varied according to geographic location and access to the internet and devices. Discussions also included student support, faculty support structures, and digital teaching in general. This provides a good start for us as we enter this research engagement with UT.

12. Discussion of Future Agenda Items and Meeting Dates - Dr. Louder

Future Agenda Items:

- Doctoral program considerations
- THECB updates (SARA, OER, community college baccalaureate programs)
- Workgroup breakouts, reports
- Standards and definitions
- Update from Kylah on data

Possible Additional Items:

- Item from Survey Workgroup
- Standards and definitions subcommittee report
- COVID Responses from Campuses
- Wider dissemination of survey results via webinar

Next Meeting:

Potentially June 4th. A poll will be sent to gauge availability of members.

13. Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 2:03 pm.