

Study and Report on Core Curriculum

**A Report to the Texas Legislature
per Senate Bill 25, Section 9
86th Texas Legislature**

October 2020

This page has been left blank intentionally.

Stuart W. Stedman, CHAIR
Fred Farias III, OD, VICE CHAIR
Ricky A. Raven, SECRETARY TO THE BOARD
S. Javaid Anwar
Cody C. Campbell
Emma W. Schwartz
R. Sam Torn
Donna N. Williams
Welcome Wilson Jr.
Levi D. McClenny, STUDENT REPRESENTATIVE

Houston
McAllen
Sugar Land
Midland
Fort Worth
El Paso
Houston
Arlington
Houston
College Station

Harrison Keller, PhD, COMMISSIONER OF HIGHER EDUCATION

Agency Mission

The mission of the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB) is to provide leadership and coordination for Texas higher education and to promote access, affordability, quality, success, and cost efficiency through *60x30TX*, resulting in a globally competitive workforce that positions Texas as an international leader.

Agency Vision

The THECB will be recognized as an international leader in developing and implementing innovative higher education policy to accomplish our mission.

Agency Philosophy

The THECB will promote access to and success in quality higher education across the state with the conviction that access and success without quality is mediocrity and that quality without access and success is unacceptable.

The THECB's core values are:

Accountability: We hold ourselves responsible for our actions and welcome every opportunity to educate stakeholders about our policies, decisions, and aspirations.

Efficiency: We accomplish our work using resources in the most effective manner.

Collaboration: We develop partnerships that result in student success and a highly qualified, globally competent workforce.

Excellence: We strive for excellence in all our endeavors.

The Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, gender, religion, age or disability in employment or the provision of services.

Please cite this report as follows: Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board. (2020). Study and Report on Core Curriculum. Austin, TX.

This page has been left blank intentionally.

Table of Contents

Executive Summary.....	v
Introduction	1
Core Curriculum Study and Report Advisory Committee.....	3
Advisory Committee Establishment.....	3
Texas Core Curriculum	3
Survey Methodology	4
Survey Results.....	4
Improving Transfer in Texas Workgroup	8
Workgroup Formation and Meetings.....	8
Design Principles for Developing Transfer Policy	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Conclusion.....	10

Appendices

Appendix A Members of the Core Curriculum Study and Report Advisory Committee.....	11
Appendix B Senate Bill 25, 86th Texas Legislature	12
Appendix C Core Curriculum Advisory Committee Survey.....	21
Appendix D Focus Areas Considered by the Transfer Workgroup	25

Executive Summary

Senate Bill (SB) 25, passed by the 86th Texas Legislature, was comprehensive legislation focused on improving transfer and facilitating students' academic progress and success. The legislation enacted several measures to improve the transfer process, promote academic progress, and encourage timely graduation of students in Texas public higher education. SB 25 included several amendments to the Texas Education Code intended to ensure that the courses students complete transfer and count toward their majors. Included in SB 25 is a directive that the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB) conduct a study and make recommendations to the Legislature regarding the feasibility of implementing statewide meta-majors for public institutions of higher education. Meta-majors are commonly used within higher education institutions to group majors and courses under larger themes and are especially helpful to guide undecided students to know what courses they should take.

This report satisfies the legislative directive and provides a summary of activities conducted by the THECB to fulfill the requirements specified in SB 25, Section 9, and codified in Texas Education Code, Section 61.8221, concerning a study and report on core curriculum.

To satisfy the directive and consider its requirements within the broader context of improving student transfer, the THECB:

- appointed an advisory committee in September 2019, using the negotiated rulemaking appointment process as specified in Texas Government Code, Chapter 2008. The 22-member Core Curriculum Study and Report Advisory Committee (Advisory Committee) includes an equal number of representatives from public junior colleges (community colleges) and general academic teaching institutions (universities) that had at least 25% of enrolled students classified as transfers for the 2018 fall semester, and
- formed the Improving Transfer in Texas Workgroup in March 2020. The 10-member workgroup is composed of an equal number of representatives of public junior colleges and general academic teaching institutions.

Both the advisory committee and the workgroup provided input and were actively engaged in the study and shared a commitment to improve transfer for Texas students.

The Improving Texas Transfer Workgroup met virtually and regularly to collaboratively study ways to substantially improve vertical transfer and the applicability of course credit in Texas public higher education institutions.

THECB staff conducted an in-depth survey of the Core Curriculum Study and Report Advisory Committee to collect data on institutions' processes for developing the core curriculum, understand views about the potential benefits or challenges of developing state meta-majors as part of the core curriculum, and gain perspectives on splitting the core curriculum into a general academic and academic discipline core curriculum.

Based on the survey data collected from the Advisory Committee and the discussion of the Advisory Committee during their October 8 meeting, and the work of the Improving Texas Transfer Workgroup, the following recommendations are provided with respect to the feasibility of implementing statewide meta-majors for institutions of higher education:

Recommendation 1: Future policies related to transfer should be student-centric and allow students to progress to their degree without incurring excess hours and additional costs.

Recommendation 2: Texas public community colleges and universities should commit to sharing equal responsibility to ensure that institutional transfer policies allow students to progress as seamlessly as practicable through their degree plans.

Recommendation 3: The THECB commits to serve as a transfer resource by providing institutions with accurate data on transfer patterns and student progression through its data modernization efforts currently underway.

Recommendation 4: Institutions should continue to pursue meta-majors if it is in their students' and institution's best interest. However, at this time it is not recommended to implement statewide meta-majors.

Should policymakers choose to pursue mandating statewide meta-majors at a later date, successful policy implementation should include developing meta-majors through a transparent process that effectively addresses the curricular challenges and providing oversight to ensure adherence by all institutions.

Introduction

Community colleges serve 70% of first- and second-year Texas students.¹ These institutions provide a vital path for students to complete their first two years of college and then proceed to a university to earn a bachelor's degree. Ensuring that students who start their postsecondary education at a community college can seamlessly proceed to earning a four-year degree is key to increasing opportunities for social and economic mobility.

However, fewer than 35% of students who start at a Texas community college transfer to a four-year institution within six years, despite the fact that most students enrolled in community college aspire to earn a baccalaureate degree.² An analysis of the last 10 years of Texas data shows that 83% of native junior-year students (that is, students who start and graduate from the same institution) complete a degree within four years.

The story is different for students who transfer to a four-year institution from a two-year institution, a practice referred to as "vertical transfer." Only 66% of students who transfer as juniors complete their degree within four years.³ In other words, these transfer students complete their degrees at a rate that is 17 percentage points lower than the students who started at the same institution in their cohort. Unclear transfer pathways, curricular misalignment between two- and four-year institutions, and insufficient and confusing information about vertical transfer are some barriers that make vertical transfer difficult.

The 86th Texas Legislature recognized the need to address student transfer through its passage of Senate Bill (SB) 25, which became effective in June 2019. The legislation includes several amendments to the Texas Education Code that are intended to ensure students' courses transfer and apply toward their major, including requiring students to file their degree plans once they complete 30 semester credit hours, requiring that the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB) to prepare a report about courses that do not transfer, and requiring institutions to prepare and post course sequences for their degree offerings beginning in fall 2021.

The legislation also included a requirement that the THECB convene an advisory committee of two- and four-year institutions to examine the feasibility of splitting the core curriculum between a general core curriculum and "meta-major" curricula as a vehicle for more efficient transfer. Specifically, the legislation directs the THECB to submit by November 1, 2020, a report to the lieutenant governor, the speaker of the House of Representatives, and the presiding officer of each legislative standing committee with primary jurisdiction over higher education. This report must detail the results of a study of the core curriculum and any recommendations concerning the feasibility of implementing statewide meta-majors for institutions of higher education in the following academic disciplines:

- (1) arts, humanities, communications, and design;
- (2) business;

¹ Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board. (2020). Texas Public Higher Education Almanac.

<https://reportcenter.highered.texas.gov/agency-publication/almanac/2020-texas-public-higher-education-almanac>

² Bailey, T., Davis, J., Fink, J., Cullinane, J., & Schudde, L. (2017). *Policy Levers to Strengthen Community College Transfer Student Success in Texas*. <https://ccrc.tc.columbia.edu/publications/policy-levers-to-strengthen-community-college-transfer-student-success-in-texas.html>

³ Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board. (2019). *Texas General Academic Institutions: Increasing Successful Community College Transfer*. <http://www.thecb.state.tx.us/DocID/pdf/6073.pdf>

- (3) education;
- (4) health sciences;
- (5) industry, manufacturing, and construction;
- (6) public safety;
- (7) science, technology, engineering, and mathematics; and
- (8) social and behavioral sciences and human services.

This report satisfies that directive and provides recommendations to continue making progress to improve transfer for Texas students.

Core Curriculum Study and Report Advisory Committee

Advisory Committee Establishment

The Advisory Committee on Core Curriculum Study and Report (Advisory Committee) was formed to assist the THECB in making recommendations to the Legislature regarding the feasibility of implementing statewide meta-majors for institutions of higher education. In accordance with SB 25, the 22-member committee is composed of 11 representatives of public junior colleges (community colleges) and 11 representatives of general academic teaching institutions (universities) (see [Appendix A](#)). The majority of the university representatives are from institutions that have large numbers of transfer students, meaning at least 25% of their enrolled students were classified as transfer students in fall 2018. The THECB officially established the Advisory Committee at its January 23, 2020 meeting.

The Advisory Committee was appointed using a formal negotiated rulemaking process pursuant to Texas Government Code, Section 2008.052 (Negotiated Rulemaking Act). The Advisory Committee was required to: (1) study the feasibility of implementing statewide meta-majors for institutions of higher education; (2) explore the efficacy of dividing the recommended core curriculum for each meta-major into a general academic core curriculum and an academic discipline core curriculum; and (3) explore the potential inclusion of courses in the field of study curricula in the recommended core curriculum.

Texas Core Curriculum

The Texas Core Curriculum (TCC) is established in the Texas Education Code, Chapter 61, Subchapter S. Rules pertaining to this statute are in Texas Administrative Code, Title 19, Part 1, Chapter 4, Subchapter B. The TCC is approved by the THECB and consists of 42 semester credit hours (SCHs). Each institution's core curriculum includes a statement of purpose, six core objectives, and nine common component areas, including eight Foundational Component Areas (FCAs) and one Component Area Option (CAO). Each FCA and the CAO have set semester credit hour requirements.

The FCAs group courses by broad discipline, for instance, by grouping courses in categories like Mathematics and Creative Arts. Each FCA has a defined component description, a set number of SCHs required for completion of a component, and specified core objectives requirements. The eight FCAs are:

- (1) Communication (6 SCHs)
- (2) Mathematics (3 SCHs)
- (3) Life and Physical Sciences (6 SCHs)
- (4) Language, Philosophy, and Culture (3 SCHs)
- (5) Creative Arts (3 SCHs)
- (6) American History (6 SCHs)
- (7) Government/Political Science (6 SCHs)
- (8) Social and Behavioral Sciences (3 SCHs)

Consisting of an additional six SCHs, the Component Area Option allows institutions to include courses in additional disciplinary areas. The CAO allows the institution flexibility to

incorporate institutional requirements or include specific degree requirements in the core curriculum. Examples are courses such as a writing focus course, a multicultural studies course, an additional mathematics course for engineering majors, or an additional social and behavioral science course for liberal arts majors. Alternatively, the CAO may provide options for students to choose additional courses from another FCA. The fourth hour of a four-SCH course that cannot be accommodated by its FCA may also be counted in the CAO SCHs.

The overarching goal of the TCC is to ensure that Texas undergraduate students attending a public institution of higher education are fully prepared to graduate in their particular major, while also ensuring that students have abilities in critical thinking, communication, empirical and quantitative skills, and understand the importance of teamwork, personal responsibility, and social responsibility. The courses included in an institution's TCC vary by institution. Texas public community colleges are limited to only courses in the THECB's *Lower-Division Academic Course Guide Manual* (ACGM), while Texas public universities may include courses outside the ACGM.

However, a majority of Texas public universities include many ACGM courses in their core curriculum. Importantly, if a student completes a course(s) that fulfills a component area of the TCC or the entire core at one institution and then transfers to another institution, the receiving institution must accept the course(s) or the entire core and apply it to the student's completion of core curriculum requirements. This does not mean that a student cannot be required to take additional lower-division courses to fulfill major-specific and/or university-specific requirements.

Survey Methodology

To gain a more in-depth understanding of institutional perspectives and current practices around the development of the core curriculum, THECB staff sent an open-ended survey to each member of the Advisory Committee. Questions from the survey are available in [Appendix B](#). The survey was intended to inform transfer policy discussions by inviting members to share their current views about the potential benefits or challenges of developing statewide meta-majors as part of the core curriculum and splitting the core into a general academic and academic discipline core curriculum.

The information from the survey was aggregated to reflect candid opinions without specifically identifying institutional members. The survey was administered through Qualtrics and was completed by 19 of the 22 members of the Advisory Committee, with representation from nine community colleges and 10 universities. THECB staff data analysis involved multiple rounds of open coding to categorize responses into smaller codes, axial coding to group codes into larger categories, and selective coding to group codes into core categories/themes. The survey results reflect core categories, themes, and the patterns found within and across institutions.

Survey Results

The responses that follow reflect the responses of the members of the Advisory Committee to the THECB survey. Responses are grouped into the following five broad themes: (1) Oversight and Core Curriculum Committee Organizational Structure; (2) Challenges of Current Core Curriculum; (3) Feasibility of Implementing Meta-Majors; (4) Field of Study; and (5) Survey Responses Related to the Advisory Committee Recommendations for Improving Transfer.

Oversight and Core Curriculum Committee Organizational Structure

All institutions reported having at least one committee that oversees new proposals for core curriculum courses. Typically, community colleges reported having one to two committees, while universities reported having several committees with oversight at various levels. Most universities responded that the process for adding courses to the core curriculum begins with faculty proposing new courses. Community colleges responded that new courses were more commonly initiated by committees or councils made up of faculty and administrators.

Challenges of Current Core Curriculum

Institutional development: More than half of community college respondents reported that there were no great challenges related to the eight Foundational Component Areas (FCAs). Some respondents noted challenges with the Component Area Option (CAO), including the perception that the CAO was used by institutions as a place to put courses that did not fit into the FCAs in their institution's core. Respondents noted that departments tended to propose major-specific courses and often did not understand what types of courses qualified to be included in the CAO. Respondents also identified courses classified in more than one of the FCAs as a challenge. Specifically, respondents identified the Creative Arts FCA and Language, Philosophy, and Culture FCA as areas of difficulty, due to the inability to come to a consensus about which courses fit core area definitions and which courses would meet THECB requirements. In addition to these two FCAs, respondents noted challenges about meeting some core objectives, particularly the requirement under the Communication objective. (Additional information about TCC may be found online at:

<https://www.highered.texas.gov/institutional-resources-programs/public-universities-health-related-institutions/transfer-resources/texas-core-curriculum-tcc/>.)

Course Transfer: Broadly, institutions responded that course requirements to fulfill a given component area varied across universities. Beyond being university-specific, course requirements were also noted as being major-specific. Furthermore, respondents noted inconsistencies with the FCA classification of courses across institutions. Respondents also expressed challenges about students taking courses to fulfill certain component areas before choosing a particular degree path. They also noted that universities frequently used the CAO to fulfill additional degree requirements for students.

Feasibility of Implementing Meta-Majors into Core Curriculum

Meta-majors are commonly used within higher education institutions to group majors and courses under larger themes and are especially helpful to guide undecided students to know what courses they should take. SB 25 defines a "meta-major" as a "collection of programs of study or academic disciplines that share common foundational skills." The following provides an overview of the Advisory Committee members' responses to the feasibility of implementing meta-majors into the core curriculum.

Benefits: While a few institutions responded that the benefits of instituting meta-majors would depend on how they were structured, most institutions agreed that implementing meta-majors would result in several benefits. About 60% of overall responses mentioned the following three benefits: (1) having consistent courses and degree requirements across institutions; (2) providing students with the flexibility for academic exploration; and (3) having the ability to provide transfer assurances.

Challenges: Seventy percent of university respondents and 44% of community college respondents responded that developing meta-majors would lead to curricula-related challenges.

Specifically, they believed this change would: (1) limit course offerings inside and outside the core; (2) potentially reduce the General Education Core to expand upper-division requirements; (3) prioritize more “practical” meta-majors over the liberal arts; (4) perhaps lead to faculty wanting to create more specialized courses; and (5) require institutions to redesign, review, and assess meta-majors and degree programs. Finally, institutions raised concerns about the full-scale implementation of meta-majors within departments and across institutions and wanted assurances that all institutions would comply with these changes. For institutions that already have implemented meta-majors into their curriculum, there was a question of what would happen if current practices do not align with future mandated meta-major requirements by the state.

Curriculum Development: The majority of community college respondents replied that the institutional process for the development of a core curriculum with the inclusion of meta-majors would not differ from the processes they currently use to develop their core curriculums. Half of the universities in the sample believed that the institutional process would require more input and work from departments and core curriculum committees at their institutions.

Accreditation: The majority of respondents from community colleges reported that incorporating meta-majors into the core curriculum would not influence or be influenced by compliance with the accreditation standards. However, 40% of university respondents believed that incorporating meta-majors would possibly be counter to the standards of compliance related to General Education, as outlined by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges. The main concern was that meta-majors would reduce students’ exposure to courses that provide a breadth of knowledge.

Field of Study

Benefits: About 30% of all respondents stated that there would be no benefit to including field of study curricula into a divided core curriculum with meta-majors. At least 60% of respondents (seven community college respondents and five university respondents) stated that there would be benefits to including field of study curricula. These benefits included: (1) improving transferability by creating pathways and providing better advising; (2) students would be able to take more discipline-specific courses; and (3) students might be more prepared for upper-division coursework.

Challenges: Over half of community college respondents stated that incorporating field of study curricula into a divided core curriculum with meta-majors would require full-scale implementation on the part of universities. As such, there would need to be agreement and transfer acceptance of courses that would satisfy meta-majors and fields of study. Additionally, respondents raised concerns about how this might impact transfer students and students who change their majors, particularly regarding time-to-degree and excess credits. About 40% of university respondents believed challenges with courses would arise. Specifically, they believed this process would: (1) limit sophomore-level classes and course offerings in general; (2) dilute the broad nature of the core and over-professionalize it; and (3) perhaps lead to programs believing they need to add more upper-division courses. Finally, respondents also noted that this process would require reviewing curricula, making alterations, and creating meta-majors.

Survey Responses Related to the Advisory Committee Recommendations for Improving Transfer

Full-Scale Implementation: The most frequently cited suggestion by universities and community colleges in the survey responses involved full-scale implementation. For the

respondents, this meant that all institutions, both universities and community colleges, should comply with state-mandated requirements (e.g., accepting courses). Furthermore, they suggested that all institutions use the Texas Common Course Numbering System and *Lower-Division Academic Course Guide Manual* (ACGM) to provide clarity on what courses students have completed.

Transparency/Student-Centric Guiding/Academic Pathways: Specific suggestions from the survey under this area of inquiry involved the need for proper advising and providing guided/academic pathways to create greater transparency for students. Other suggestions included: (1) creating a statewide database so students can track their academic plan and progress; (2) clearly identifying all requirements on degree plans; and (3) creating a universal transcript with clearly marked areas for completion of core areas and blocks.

Relationship Building: A common theme from the responses was the conclusion that community colleges and universities must create better partnerships with each other. One specific suggestion from survey respondents included using articulation agreements and making them publicly available.

THECB Guidance and Communication/Support: Survey respondents asked for additional training and guidance on issues related to transfer and that the agency communicate any changes to college personnel. Additionally, they asked that the agency ensure that its committees (e.g., field of study, ACGM, and meta-majors) receive wide support from faculty and administrators at community colleges and universities.

Improving Transfer in Texas Workgroup

Workgroup Formation and Meetings

To improve transfer among Texas postsecondary institutions, the THECB formed the Improving Transfer in Texas Workgroup (Transfer Workgroup) in March 2020. The 10-member workgroup is composed of five representatives of public community colleges and five representatives of general academic teaching institutions. The workgroup is co-chaired by Mr. Jacob Fraire, President and Chief Executive Officer, Texas Association of Community Colleges, and Dr. James Hallmark, Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs, Texas A&M University System.

The Transfer Workgroup began meeting together virtually on a weekly basis on April 23, 2020, to collaboratively explore ways to:

- (1) substantially improve vertical transfer in Texas public higher education institutions;
- (2) improve the applicability of credit to a major; and
- (3) reduce the number of excess semester credit hours students complete for a degree.

Supported by THECB staff, each meeting of the Transfer Workgroup involved substantial committee discussion and data review, including consideration of existing transfer policies and mechanisms, such as the Texas Common Course Numbering System, Texas Core Curriculum, Field of Study Curricula, and the *Lower-Division Academic Course Guide Manual*. The workgroup reviewed and discussed the work of the Texas Student Success Council, the Texas Transfer Alliance, the Texas Success Center, and the Postsecondary Innovation Network, as well as regional/system initiatives such as the University of Houston's Guided Pathways to Success, the North Texas Community College Consortium, The University of Texas System Transfer Advisory Group's Transfer Study, and the Texas Regional Alignment Networks.

Finally, in addition to discussing the implications of amendments to the Texas Education Code enacted by SB 25, 86th Texas Legislature, the workgroup also attended "learning sessions" with representatives of other states who provided insight into their own experience with transfer statutes and initiatives, particularly with respect to design implementation, challenges, outcomes, and key takeaways regarding lessons learned. These included representatives from:

- (1) California State University (CSU) regarding California's Student Transfer Achievement Reform Act and the 60-semester-unit Associate Degree for Transfer, which is designed to streamline students' upward transfer from California's 72-district California community college system to a CSU institution;
- (2) the University System of Georgia (USG) regarding the 60-credit-hour, "stackable" Nexus Degree, which was created by USG to prepare students for careers in high-demand workforce fields;
- (3) the State University of New York (SUNY) regarding the Seamless Transfer Model, which was established by the SUNY Board of Trustees and designed to guarantee students the ability to transfer all completed general education requirements and courses toward their major to and from any of SUNY's 64 campuses;
- (4) the College System of Tennessee regarding the Complete College Tennessee Act of 2010 and the Tennessee Transfer Pathways, which consist of 60 credit hours of

- instruction that can be transferred and applied toward the requirements for a bachelor's degree at the state's public universities; and
- (5) the Washington State Board for Community and Technical Colleges regarding the state's two primary 60-credit-hour transfer degrees, collaboratively created by the state's institutions of higher education and designed to provide students with a flexible and general transfer degree pathway or a transfer degree pathway for students focused on science, technology, engineering, and mathematics fields.

Design Principles for Developing Transfer Policy

Subsequent to their learning sessions and deliberations, and as a framework for adjusting existing policies and/or developing new policies and mechanisms, the Transfer Workgroup presented the following design principles to the board of the THECB at the board's quarterly meeting on July 23, 2020:

Principle 1 (Shared Responsibility): Both community colleges and universities share equal responsibility for an efficient transfer framework.

Principle 2 (Transparency/Student-Centric Academic Pathways): The transfer framework must be seamless and transparent for students.

Principle 3 (Optimizing Courses Applying Upon Transfer): The transfer framework must optimize the number of courses/credits applicable to the major upon transfer to a university.

Principle 4 (Process): The transfer framework shall be developed through a transparent process that involves all institutions participating in a formal venue to identify and to endorse mechanisms for efficient transfer.

Principle 5 (Full-Scale Implementation): The mechanisms of the transfer framework must be adhered to by all institutions. A formal venue will be sustained for post-implementation oversight.

As of the publication of this report, the work of the Transfer Workgroup is ongoing.

Conclusion

Taken together, the responses of the Advisory Committee survey indicate that implementing statewide meta-majors for Texas public institutions of higher education may have the potential to offer benefits at the institutional level; however, at the statewide level, full statewide implementation would present considerable challenges. Depending on how the meta-majors were structured, and ensuring that all institutions comply with any future meta-major requirements by the state, respondents indicated that overall benefits could include: (1) having consistent courses and degree requirements across institutions; (2) providing students with the flexibility for academic exploration; and (3) having the ability to provide transfer assurances.

Of the many institutional challenges identified, the greatest challenges to implementing statewide meta-majors would likely involve curricula-related challenges, including (1) limiting course offerings inside and outside the core; (2) potentially reducing the General Education Core to expand upper-division requirements; (3) prioritizing more “practical” meta-majors over the liberal arts; (4) the possibility of faculty wanting to create more specialized courses; and (5) requiring institutions to redesign, review, and assess meta-majors and degree programs. This fifth curricula-related challenge would be more severe for those institutions that already have implemented meta-majors into their curricula, particularly if current practices did not align with state requirements. Further, while the institutional process for the development of a core curriculum with the inclusion of meta-majors would not differ from the processes currently used by community colleges to develop their core curriculum, half of the university respondents stated that the institutional process would require more input and work from departments and core curriculum committees at their institutions.

Based on the survey data collected from the Advisory Committee and the discussion of the Advisory Committee during their October 8 meeting, and the work of the Improving Texas Transfer Workgroup, the following recommendations are provided with respect to the feasibility of implementing statewide meta-majors for institutions of higher education:

Recommendation 1: Future policies related to transfer should be student-centric and allow students to progress to their degree without incurring excess hours and additional costs.

Recommendation 2: Texas public community colleges and universities should commit to sharing equal responsibility to ensure that institutional transfer policies allow students to progress as seamlessly as practicable through their degree plans.

Recommendation 3: The THECB commits to serve as a transfer resource by providing institutions with accurate data on transfer patterns and student progression through its data modernization efforts currently underway.

Recommendation 4: Institutions should continue to pursue meta-majors if it is in their students’ and institution’s best interest. However, at this time it is not recommended to implement statewide meta-majors.

Should policymakers choose to pursue mandating statewide meta-majors at a later date, successful policy implementation should include developing meta-majors through a transparent process that effectively addresses the curricular challenges and providing oversight to ensure adherence by all institutions.

Appendix A

Members of the Core Curriculum Study and Report Advisory Committee

Representatives of Public Community Colleges

- Dr. Lynda Villanueva, Provost and Vice President for Academic & Student Affairs, Brazosport College
- Dr. Robin Garrett, Deputy Chancellor for Academic & Student Success, Central Texas College
- Dr. Catherine Olivarez, Managing Director of Guided Pathways to Success, Dallas College
- Dr. Norma Perez, Vice Chancellor of Instructional Services and Chief Academic Officer, Houston Community College
- Ms. Becky Johnson, Dean, Kilgore College
- Dr. Horacio Salinas, Dean of Arts and Sciences, Laredo College
- Dr. Fred Hills, Vice President of Instruction, McLennan Community College
- Dr. Bruce King, Interim Vice Chancellor for Instruction and Provost, North Central Texas College
- Dr. Jennifer Kent, Vice President, Ranger College
- Dr. Robin Satterwhite, President, South Plains College
- Dr. Susan Guzman-Trevino, Vice President for Academic Affairs, Temple College

Representatives of Public Universities

- Dr. Donald Topliff, Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs, Angelo State University
- Dr. Kristen Garrison, Associate Vice President of Academic Affairs, Midwestern State University
- Dr. Yvonne Villanueva-Russell, Dean College of Innovation & Design, Texas A&M University-Commerce
- Dr. Barbara Lerner, Vice Provost for Undergraduate Studies & Academic Partnerships, Texas Woman's University
- Dr. Kambra K. Bolch, Associate Dean for Academic Programs, Texas State University
- Dr. Katherine Jager, Associate Professor of English, University of Houston-Downtown (
- Mr. Shannon Goodman, Vice President for Enrollment, University of North Texas
- Dr. Rebecca Lewis, Assistant Vice Provost, The University of Texas at Arlington
- Dr. Brent Iverson, Dean of School of Undergraduate Studies, The University of Texas at Austin
- Dr. Si Millican, Associate Vice Provost for Core Curriculum, The University of Texas at San Antonio
- Dr. Jonikka Charlton, Associate Vice President for Student Academic Success, The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley

Appendix B

Senate Bill 25, 86th Texas Legislature

AN ACT

relating to measures to facilitate the transfer, academic progress, and timely graduation of students in public higher education.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF TEXAS:

SECTION 1. Subchapter H, Chapter 51, Education Code, is amended by adding Sections 51.400, 51.4033, and 51.4034 to read as follows:

Sec. 51.400. DEFINITIONS. In this subchapter:

(1) "Coordinating board" means the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board.

(2) "General academic teaching institution," "institution of higher education," and "public junior college" have the meanings assigned by Section 61.003.

Sec. 51.4033. REPORT OF NONTRANSFERABLE CREDIT. (a) Not later than March 1 of each year and in the form prescribed by the coordinating board, each general academic teaching institution shall provide to the coordinating board and the legislature a report describing any courses in the Lower-Division Academic Course Guide Manual or its successor adopted by the coordinating board for which a student who transfers to the institution from another institution of higher education is not granted:

(1) academic credit at the receiving institution; or

(2) if the student has declared a major and has not changed majors, academic credit toward the student's major at the receiving institution.

(b) A report required by this section must indicate:

(1) the course name and type;

(2) which institution of higher education provided academic credit for the course;

and

(3) the reason why the receiving institution did not grant academic credit for the course as described by Subsection (a).

Sec. 51.4034. REPORT OF COURSES TAKEN AT JUNIOR COLLEGES. (a) Not later than March 1 of each year and in the form prescribed by the coordinating board, each public junior college shall provide to the coordinating board and the legislature a report on courses taken by

students who, during the preceding academic year, transferred to a general academic teaching institution or earned an associate degree at the college.

(b) A report required by this section must include the total number of:

(1) courses attempted and completed at the college, including the total number of semester credit hours for those courses, disaggregated by whether the course is in:

(A) the Workforce Education Course Manual or its successor adopted by the coordinating board; or

(B) the Lower-Division Academic Course Guide Manual or its successor adopted by the coordinating board;

(2) courses attempted and completed at the college that are not in the recommended core curriculum developed by the coordinating board under Section 61.822; and

(3) dual credit courses, including courses for joint high school and junior college credit under Section 130.008, attempted and completed at the college.

SECTION 2. Section 51.762, Education Code, is amended by adding Subsection (j) to read as follows:

(j) In adopting a form under this section, the board shall ensure that an applicant may indicate on the form the applicant's consent to an institution of higher education to which the applicant submits an application for admission to a particular degree program using the form to, if the institution denies the applicant admission to that degree program, provide the applicant's application to other institutions of higher education that offer the degree program.

SECTION 3. Section 51.9685(a)(2), Education Code, is amended to read as follows:

(2) "Institution of higher education" has [~~and "public junior college" have~~] the meaning [~~meanings~~] assigned by Section 61.003.

SECTION 4. Section 51.9685, Education Code, is amended by amending Subsections (b), (c), and (g) and adding Subsection (c-2) to read as follows:

(b) Except as otherwise provided by Subsection (c), each student enrolled in an associate or bachelor's degree program at an institution of higher education shall file a degree plan with the institution after the 12th class day but before [~~not later than~~] the end of the [~~second regular~~] semester or term immediately following the semester or term in which the student earned a cumulative total of 30 [45] or more semester credit hours for coursework successfully completed by the student, including transfer courses, international baccalaureate courses, dual credit

courses, and any other course for which the institution the student attends has awarded the student college course credit, including course credit awarded by examination.

(c) A student to whom Subsection (b) [this section] applies who begins the student's first semester or term at an institution of higher education with 30 [45] or more semester credit hours of course credit for courses described by Subsection (b) shall file a degree plan with the institution after the 12th class day but before [not later than] the end of that [the student's second regular] semester or term [at the institution].

(c-2) A student enrolled in a dual credit course at an institution of higher education and to whom Subsection (b) does not apply shall file a degree plan with the institution not later than:

(1) the end of the second regular semester or term immediately following the semester or term in which the student earned a cumulative total of 15 or more semester credit hours of course credit for dual credit courses successfully completed by the student; or

(2) if the student begins the student's first semester or term at the institution with 15 or more semester credit hours of course credit for dual credit courses successfully completed by the student, the end of the student's second regular semester or term at the institution.

(g) The Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board, in consultation with institutions of higher education, shall [may] adopt rules as necessary for the administration of this section, including rules to ensure compliance with this section. In adopting those rules, the coordinating board shall use the negotiated rulemaking procedures under Chapter 2008, Government Code.

SECTION 5. Subchapter Z, Chapter 51, Education Code, is amended by adding Sections 51.96852 and 51.96853 to read as follows:

Sec. 51.96852. RECOMMENDED COURSE SEQUENCES. (a) In this section:

(1) "Coordinating board" means the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board.

(2) "Institution of higher education" has the meaning assigned by Section 61.003.

(b) Each institution of higher education shall develop at least one recommended course sequence for each undergraduate certificate or degree program offered by the institution. Each recommended course sequence must:

(1) identify all required lower-division courses for the applicable certificate or degree program;

(2) include for each course, if applicable:

(A) the course number or course equivalent under the common course numbering system approved by the coordinating board under Section 61.832; and

(B) the course equivalent in the Lower-Division Academic Course Guide Manual or its successor adopted by the coordinating board;

(3) be designed to enable a full-time student to obtain a certificate or degree, as applicable, within:

(A) for a 60-hour degree or certificate program, two years; or

(B) for a 120-hour degree program, four years; and

(4) include a specific sequence in which courses should be completed to ensure completion of the applicable program within the time frame described by Subdivision (3).

(c) Each institution of higher education shall:

(1) include the recommended course sequences developed under this section in the institution's course catalog and on the institution's Internet website; and

(2) submit the recommended course sequences developed under this section to the coordinating board as provided by coordinating board rule.

(d) The coordinating board, in consultation with institutions of higher education, shall adopt rules as necessary for the administration of this section. In adopting those rules, the coordinating board shall use the negotiated rulemaking procedures under Chapter 2008, Government Code.

Sec. 51.96853. TRANSFER OF CREDIT FROM LOWER-DIVISION INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION; ARTICULATION AGREEMENTS. (a) In this section:

(1) "Articulation agreement" means a formal written agreement between a lower-division institution of higher education and a general academic teaching institution identifying courses offered by the lower-division institution that must be accepted for credit toward specific course requirements at the general academic teaching institution.

(2) "General academic teaching institution" has the meaning assigned by Section 61.003.

(3) "Lower-division institution of higher education" means a public junior college, public state college, or public technical institute, as those terms are defined by Section 61.003.

(b) Each general academic teaching institution may enter into an articulation agreement with a lower-division institution of higher education for a certificate or degree program for which students transferring from the lower-division institution to the general academic teaching institution receive transfer credit.

(c) An articulation agreement entered into under Subsection (b) on or after September 1, 2019, may use field of study curricula developed by the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board under Section 61.823.

(d) A general academic teaching institution may extend an existing articulation agreement entered into under Subsection (b) to another lower-division institution of higher education with respect to the transfer of courses from that lower-division institution of higher education to the general academic teaching institution, on request by that lower-division institution of higher education.

(e) An articulation agreement established under this section may enable a transfer student to receive up to 60 semester credit hours for courses completed at the lower-division institution of higher education.

(f) A general academic teaching institution's participation in an articulation agreement under this section does not affect the institution's admissions policies.

SECTION 6. Section 51.9715, Education Code, is amended by adding Subsection (a-1) and amending Subsection (b) to read as follows:

(a-1) An institution of higher education, or a school district that offers international baccalaureate courses, dual credit courses, or any other course for which an institution of higher education may award students enrolled at the district college course credit, including course credit awarded by examination, may release student information to an institution of higher education for purposes of transferring course credit to that institution or enabling the awarding of course credit by that institution, in accordance with federal law regarding the confidentiality of student information, including the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974 (20 U.S.C. Section 1232g), and any state law relating to the privacy of student information.

(b) An institution of higher education or school district may release student information in accordance with Subsection (a) or (a-1), as applicable, through:

- (1) the National Student Clearinghouse; or
- (2) a similar [~~national~~] electronic data sharing and exchange platform operated by an agent of the institution or district that meets nationally accepted standards, conventions, and practices.

SECTION 7. Section 61.059(p), Education Code, is amended to read as follows:

(p) In its instruction and operations formula applicable to an institution of higher education, the board may not include any semester credit hours earned for dual course credit by

a high school student for high school and college credit at the institution unless those credit hours are earned through any of the following:

(1) a course in the core curriculum of the institution providing course credit;

(2) a course offered by the institution providing course credit in:

(A) a field of study curriculum developed by the board under Section

61.823; or

(B) a program of study curriculum established by the board under Section

61.8235;

(3) a career and technical education course that applies to any certificate or associate's degree offered by the institution providing course credit; or

(4) ~~(3)~~ a foreign language course.

SECTION 8. Section 61.821, Education Code, is amended by adding Subdivision (4) to read as follows:

(4) "Meta major" means a collection of programs of study or academic disciplines that share common foundational skills.

SECTION 9. Subchapter S, Chapter 61, Education Code, is amended by adding Section 61.8221 to read as follows:

Sec. 61.8221. STUDY AND REPORT ON CORE CURRICULUM. (a) The board shall conduct a study and make recommendations to the legislature regarding the feasibility of implementing statewide meta majors for institutions of higher education. The board shall consider meta majors in the following academic disciplines:

(1) arts, humanities, communications, and design;

(2) business;

(3) education;

(4) health sciences;

(5) industry, manufacturing, and construction;

(6) public safety;

(7) science, technology, engineering, and mathematics; and

(8) social and behavioral sciences and human services.

(b) The board shall establish an advisory committee to assist the board in completing the board's duties under this section and provide the board with subject matter expertise and analysis.

The advisory committee consists of the following members appointed by the board in equal numbers:

(1) representatives of public junior colleges designated by the applicable college to represent the college on the advisory committee; and

(2) representatives of general academic teaching institutions designated by the applicable institution to represent the institution on the advisory committee.

(c) A majority of members appointed to the advisory committee under Subsection (b)(2) must be representatives of a general academic teaching institution at which at least 25 percent of students enrolled at the institution for the 2018 fall semester were classified as transfer students.

(d) In appointing members to the advisory committee under Subsection (b), the board shall, to the greatest extent practicable, ensure that the membership of the advisory committee is balanced with respect to:

(1) institutional representation, including:

(A) the regions of the state;

(B) the mission type of the general academic teaching institution or public junior college;

(C) university system affiliation, as applicable;

(D) student enrollment; and

(E) institutional groupings under the board's higher education accountability system;

(2) representation of faculty and administrators at general academic teaching institutions or public junior colleges;

(3) representation of academic disciplines; and

(4) any other factors the board determines relevant.

(e) The advisory committee shall study and make recommendations to the board regarding the effectiveness of the requirements regarding the transfer of course credit between institutions of higher education for courses in the core curriculum under Section 61.822 in supporting more efficient undergraduate transfer between institutions of higher education. The study and recommendations must include an analysis of:

(1) the efficacy of dividing the recommended core curriculum for each meta major into a general academic core curriculum and an academic discipline core curriculum and, if

determined to be efficacious, the recommended number of semester credit hours for each component of the recommended core curriculum for each meta major;

(2) methods to ensure that courses completed in the general academic core curriculum and academic discipline core curriculum transfer between institutions of higher education for course credit applied toward a student's major at the receiving institution; and

(3) the potential inclusion of courses in the field of study curricula adopted by the board under Section 61.823 in the recommended core curriculum adopted by the board under Section 61.822.

(f) Each quarter ending before November 1, 2020, the advisory committee shall submit to the chairs of the standing legislative committees with primary jurisdiction over higher education a report on the advisory committee's progress on the study and recommendations required under Subsection (e).

(g) Not later than November 1, 2020, the board shall submit to the lieutenant governor, the speaker of the house of representatives, and the standing legislative committees with primary jurisdiction over higher education a report on the results of the study conducted under Subsection (a) and any recommendations for legislative or other action.

(h) This section expires September 1, 2021.

SECTION 10. Section 61.827, Education Code, is amended to read as follows:

Sec. 61.827. RULES. (a) The board is authorized to adopt rules implementing the provisions of this subchapter.

(b) In adopting rules regarding the recommended core curriculum developed under Section 61.822, the board shall use the negotiated rulemaking procedures under Chapter 2008, Government Code.

SECTION 11. Section 130.0104(c), Education Code, is amended to read as follows:

(c) In complying with the requirements regarding the filing of a degree plan under ~~[Notwithstanding] Section 51.9685, [before the beginning of the regular semester or term immediately following the semester or term in which] a student enrolled [successfully completes a cumulative total of 30 or more semester credit hours for coursework] in a multidisciplinary studies associate degree program established under this section~~ ~~[, the student]~~ must meet with an academic advisor to complete a degree plan ~~[, as defined by Section 51.9685(a)(1),]~~ that:

(1) accounts for all remaining credit hours required for the completion of the degree program; and

(2) emphasizes:

(A) the student's transition to a particular four-year college or university that the student chooses; and

(B) preparations for the student's intended field of study or major at the four-year college or university.

SECTION 12. Section 51.9685(c-1), Education Code, is repealed.

SECTION 13. (a) Except as provided by Subsection (b) of this section, this Act applies beginning with the 2019-2020 academic year.

(b) Sections 51.96852 and 51.96853, Education Code, as added by this Act, apply beginning with the 2021-2022 academic year.

SECTION 14. Each public institution of higher education required to submit a report under Section 51.4033 or 51.4034, Education Code, as added by this Act, shall submit the first report not later than March 1, 2021.

SECTION 15. This Act takes effect immediately if it receives a vote of two-thirds of all the members elected to each house, as provided by Section 39, Article III, Texas Constitution. If this Act does not receive the vote necessary for immediate effect, this Act takes effect September 1, 2019.

President of the Senate

Speaker of the House

I hereby certify that S.B. No. 25 passed the Senate on April 24, 2019, by the following vote: Yeas 31, Nays 0; and that the Senate concurred in House amendments on May 23, 2019, by the following vote: Yeas 31, Nays 0.

Secretary of the Senate

I hereby certify that S.B. No. 25 passed the House, with amendments, on May 21, 2019, by the following vote: Yeas 142, Nays 0, two present not voting.

Chief Clerk of the House

Approved:

Date

Governor

Appendix C

Core Curriculum Advisory Committee Survey

Introduction

Thank you for providing your insight on core curriculum and meta-majors. The purpose of the survey is to learn more about the process for developing the core curriculum at your institution and to secure your view of the possible benefits and potential challenges of developing meta-majors as part of the core curriculum and splitting the core into a general academic and academic discipline core curriculum.

Use the following link to download a pdf copy of the questions to review prior to taking the survey: [Core and FOS survey.pdf](#). The survey can be saved and continued later if you are using the same computer and you have cookies enabled.

Please complete this survey by: **5:00 PM Central Standard Time, Tuesday, September 1, 2020.**

For your reference, below are key definitions and charges that pertain to this report. If you have questions about core curriculum or FOS please email Stacey.Silverman@highered.texas.gov. If you need technical support with the survey please email Melissa.Humphries@highered.texas.gov.

Charges for the report as stated in SB 25 Sections 8-10

Core Curriculum as defined under Texas Education Code, Subchapter S, Section 61.821(1) "core curriculum" is defined as "the curriculum in liberal arts, humanities, and sciences and political, social, and cultural history that all undergraduate students of an institution of higher education are required to complete before receiving an academic undergraduate degree."

Meta-majors as defined and listed in SB 25: Senate Bill 25 Section 8 amended Section 61.821 of the Texas Education Code by adding Subdivision (4) which defines "meta-major" as "a collection of programs of study or academic disciplines that share common foundational skills."

- (1) arts, humanities, communications, and design;
- (2) business;
- (3) education;
- (4) health sciences;
- (5) industry, manufacturing, and construction;
- (6) public safety;
- (7) science, technology, engineering, and mathematics; and
- (8) social and behavioral sciences and human services.

Default Question Block

Please provide the information of the person completing this survey

Name

Institution

Email Address

Block 1

1. Explain your institution's process for the development of core curriculum. Please include information on the administrative units involved (departments, academic colleges, chief academic/instructional officers/offices, faculty committees), and the levels of approval required.

Block 2

With respect to the individual foundational component areas (FCA) and component area option (CAO) of the current core curriculum structure, please answer the following questions.

2a. Which FCA and CAO present the greatest challenge(s) for **institutional development** and why?

2b. Which FCA and CAO present the greatest challenge(s) for the **application of transfer courses to degree requirements** and why?

Block 3

3a. Describe the possible **benefits** to your institution and statewide of developing meta-majors as part of core curriculum (as outlined by Senate Bill 25 (SB 25), 86th Texas Legislature).

3b. Describe the possible **challenges** to your institution and statewide of developing meta-majors as part of core curriculum (as outlined by Senate Bill 25 (SB 25), 86th Texas Legislature).

Block 4

4. How would the institutional process for the development of core curriculum with the inclusion of meta-majors differ from the processes now used for core curriculum development at your institution?

Block 5

Currently, core curriculum is structured to address the requirements of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC) standards of accreditation for general education. SACSCOC standards state that in offering degrees, "the institution requires the successful completion of a general education component at the undergraduate level." That general education component is "for baccalaureate programs, a minimum of 30 semester hours or the equivalent" and "ensures breadth of knowledge. These credit hours include at least one course from each of the following areas: humanities/fine arts, social/behavioral sciences, and natural science/mathematics. These courses do not narrowly focus on those skills, techniques, and procedures specific to a particular occupation or profession."

5. How would incorporating meta-majors into core curriculum influence or be influenced by compliance with the accreditation standard?

Block 8

6a. Describe the possible **benefits** of including field of study curricula into a divided core curriculum with meta-majors (as outlined by Senate Bill 25 (SB 25), 86th Texas Legislature).

6b. Describe the possible **challenges** of including field of study curricula into a divided core curriculum with meta-majors (as outlined by Senate Bill 25 (SB 25), 86th Texas Legislature).

Block 9

7. What could be done to ensure that students who begin their coursework at a 2-year institution and plan to transfer to a 4-year institution can move seamlessly through their selected area of study?

Powered by Qualtrics

Appendix D

Focus Areas Considered by the Transfer Workgroup

- Senate Bill 25, 86th Texas Legislature
- Existing state of Texas transfer policies and mechanisms, including:
 - Texas Common Course Numbering System (TCCNS)
 - Texas Core Curriculum
 - Field of Study Curricula
 - *Lower-Division Academic Course Guide Manual*
- Existing statewide initiatives, including:
 - Texas Student Success Council
 - Texas Transfer Alliance
 - Texas Success Center
 - Postsecondary Innovation Network
- Existing regional/system initiatives, including:
 - University of Houston's Guided Pathways to Success
 - North Texas Community College Consortium
 - The University of Texas System Transfer Advisory Group's Transfer Study
 - Texas Regional Alignment Networks
- Other states' current initiatives, including:
 - The state of California's Student Transfer Achievement Reform Act and the 60-semester-unit Associate Degree for Transfer
 - The University System of Georgia's 60-credit-hour, "stackable" Nexus Degree
 - The State University of New York's Seamless Transfer Model
 - The College System of Tennessee's Complete College Tennessee Act of 2010 and the Tennessee Transfer Pathways
 - The state of Washington's two primary 60-credit-hour transfer degrees



This document is available on the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board website:
<http://highered.texas.gov>.

For more information contact:

Stacey Silverman, Ph.D., Assistant Commissioner
Academic Quality and Workforce
Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board
P.O. Box 12788
Austin, TX 78711
PHONE 512-427-6206
FAX 512-427-6168
Stacey.Silverman@highered.texas.gov