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512/ 427-6101
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Web site:
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Belle S. Wheelan, Ph.D.
President
Southern Association of Colleges and Schools
Commission on Colleges
1866 Southern Lane
Decatur, Georgia 30033-4097

Dear Dr. Wheelan,

I am writing in response to your letter dated August 24, 2018, regarding the current use of Field of Study Curriculum (FOSC) under the auspices of the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB).

The THECB recognizes the concerns of faculty with the process regarding the development of FOSC. The concerns raised by faculty revolve around the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC) principles 10.4, 10.7, and 10.8, having to do with faculty control of the curriculum and institutional control of transfer, respectively. To address the first concern please note that faculty do retain control over the curriculum, just not in the manner to which they have become accustomed. The FOSC process asks faculty to function in a different way – decisions regarding courses to be included in the lower-division curriculum are made by statewide committees of faculty and direct administrators of disciplines, rather than by faculty and administrators representing individual institutional departments. Further, Field of Study Curricula only address lower-division courses, not upper-division courses. Thus, departmental faculty and administrators continue to exercise wide discretion in the degree program's applicable curriculum at the upper-division level.

The second concern has to do with the institution's control over the transfer of courses process. While it is true that state law compels institutions to accept in transfer and apply to the appropriate major completed FOSC and completed courses within a FOSC, the THECB fully expects institutions to maintain quality control over courses that students present for transfer. Evidence to date strongly suggests that transfer students do as well, if not better, than native students in subsequent courses. Nonetheless, the THECB expects and encourages institutions to report to both the sending institution and to the THECB any instance in which they feel students are being inadequately prepared for upper-division coursework.

Solving the problem of the transfer and applicability of credits to a degree in a state with a highly decentralized higher education regime has become a priority of the Texas legislature. To have any real impact on the transferability and applicability of courses to majors, statewide solutions are a necessity. To reduce inefficiencies and costs associated with the applicability of courses to majors, in 1999 the 76th Texas Legislature mandated that the THECB, with the assistance of advisory committees representing two- and four-year institutions of higher education, develop Field of Study

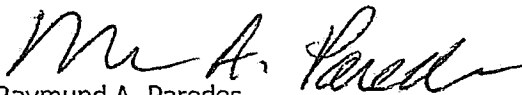
Letter, Belle S. Wheelan, Ph.D.
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Curricula (see Texas Education Code, Chapter 61, Sec. 61.823, attached. FOSC determine the courses that students take at the lower division level to be successful in upper division courses. They determine, at a minimal level, the learning outcomes for the courses in the FOSC. They do not dictate the pedagogy used, nor the manner in which subject matter content is presented.

In conclusion, the FOSC process is faculty driven and in no way detracts from an institution's ability to address genuine concerns related to the preparation of transfer students. Further, the THECB is committed to reviewing approved FOSC at least every five years, but also will review a THECB-approved FOSC at any time deemed necessary as a result of field request(s) or issues of concern. In addition, the THECB is always reviewing its processes. In response to the concerns raised by faculty we are committed to ensuring that all committees have adequate time to respond to concerns raised by faculty not on the committee. An implementation guide codifying processes is in development. A survey of previous committees and their experience with development of FOSC is being undertaken.

Should you have any further questions or concerns, I would be happy to discuss them with you.

Sincerely,


Raymund A. Paredes

Attachments:

Texas Education Code, Chapter 61, Sec. 61.823

Texas Administrative Code, Title 19, Part 1, Chapter 4, Subchapter B, Rule 4.27