



# Sam Houston State University

*A Member of The Texas State University System*

## OFFICE OF ACADEMIC AFFAIRS

### Core Curriculum Assessment

Sam Houston State University's core curriculum is designed to provide students the opportunity to develop basic competencies in communication, mathematics, natural sciences, humanities, visual and performing arts, and behavioral and social sciences. Following the guidelines provided by the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board, per the instructions of the 75<sup>th</sup> Texas Legislature, Sam Houston State University reconfigured its core, effective fall 1999.

A University Core Curriculum Committee reviewed courses submitted for core inclusion to ensure compliance with the exemplary educational objectives set by the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board. During the 2003-2004 Academic Year, Sam Houston State University's Core Curriculum Assessment Committee reviewed the syllabi of core courses and interviewed a sample of faculty and students to ascertain whether or not the course content of the Sam Houston State University core remains true to the exemplary educational objectives. The unanimous consensus of the committee was that the course content of the core courses are appropriately aligned with the exemplary educational objectives.

Furthermore, Sam Houston State University's core does satisfy the Legislature's and the Coordinating Board's intent to be fully transferable to both two- and four-year colleges and universities. Appendix 1 provides a listing of Sam Houston State University's core courses and their respective Texas Common Course Numbers (TCCNs).

The Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board as well as the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools have in recent years placed a growing emphasis on the assessment of student learning outcomes. The Sam Houston State University's Core Curriculum Assessment Committee has developed an assessment plan dedicated to measuring student learning as it relates to the exemplary educational objectives addressed by the core. The committee believes that two of the best sources of information available to answer these concerns are the students and the faculty. Furthermore, the committee strongly believes that the combination of internal instruments, benchmarking, and normative measures provide a more robust assessment than solely relying on institutional self-evaluations.

Toward that end, Sam Houston State University's Core Curriculum Assessment Committee has developed the following assessment plan. The major component of the plan will be a normative evaluation of student learning in the respective educational exemplary objectives available through the IDEA process, a nationally-normed and widely utilized instrument. The IDEA process identifies twelve learning objectives (See Appendix 2). These objectives run the gamut of objectives covered by the core. Each student when evaluating his/her educational experience in a specific course is asked to rate on a five-point scale the progress made toward each objective. The wording of the scale is:

- 1 = No apparent progress
- 2 = Slight progress; I made small gains on this objective.
- 3 = Moderate progress; I made some gains on this objective.
- 4 = Substantial progress; I made large gains on this objective.
- 5 = Exceptional progress; I made outstanding gains on this objective.

Each faculty member will be asked to identify, for each course taught, a series of objectives from the list of the twelve that are either essential or important for their course. Not every objective relates to each course. The committee identified cross classifications between IDEA's learning objectives the Coordinating Boards exemplary educational objectives (See Appendix 3). Although faculty will vary in terms of the objectives they select, the committee has set as a preliminary criterion the evaluation of objectives identified by at least 70% of the faculty teaching the specific core course.

Procedurally, the evaluations will be compiled and analyzed by the IDEA Center at Kansas State University. The Center will create and return a teaching-effectiveness report for each faculty/course combination. The committee will then create a composite evaluation based on these pooled faculty evaluations for each core course. Two invaluable components of the report produced by the IDEA Center are a normative measure based upon the results of 170 universities using this instrument and recommendations for improved effectiveness. These normative measures provide a comparative benchmark within each academic discipline. Areas that are evaluated to be less than effective will demand immediate attention. Toward that end, the IDEA Center report includes recommendations for increased effectiveness. These recommendations will be summarized and made available to all faculty members teaching core classes.

Sam Houston State University's Core Curriculum Assessment Committee anticipates that the use of the IDEA process will provide valuable assessment tools and insights. However, the committee will develop a series of supplementary measures with the goal of providing multiple assessments measures and opportunities for improvement. Two possible supplementary measures are: (1) faculty assessment of level of preparation from faculty teaching courses for which the core is a prerequisite, based on student-performance in post-core classes and (2) a portfolio analysis of a sample of work from students in core classes. Independent faculty graders using an agreed upon rubric will assess the students' performance as it relates to the exemplary educational objectives.

Sam Houston State University's core curriculum assessment process will remain an interactive process. The committee will regularly review the assessment inputs and the success of improvement processes implemented as a result of the assessment process. Changes to the process will be made as needed to afford Sam Houston State University students the greatest opportunity to benefit from the common core.