

Date: October 30, 2008

To: Dr. Kay Clayton, Provost

From: Dr. Judith Bean, Associate Vice President for Undergraduate Studies

In response to the need to determine who will be responsible for using core assessment data to make improvements in core learning, the Undergraduate Council provides the recommendation that all undergraduate programs be responsible for developing student learning in the core skill of critical thinking.

Most of the core outcomes are being taught and assessed within the courses in the core content areas; the departments offering the courses then address the need for student learning improvement based on assessment. In addition to the core content areas, there are also 6 "basic intellectual competencies" specified by the state which are to be integrated into all core courses. These are being assessed by common instruments (exams or rubrics) across the university. (Core outline is presented on p.2.)

To determine who is responsible for using assessment data to make improvements in student learning for the 6 competencies, the Undergraduate Council discussed which one/s could be adopted university-wide as learning outcomes for which all undergraduate programs would be responsible. These competencies are:

- Critical Thinking
- Reading
- Writing
- Speaking
- Listening
- Computer Literacy

At the Undergraduate Council meeting on Oct. 27, members voted to begin with **critical thinking** as the first undergraduate learning outcome for implementation across the curriculum beginning Fall 2009. There was also general consensus to **consider adding the other basic competencies incrementally**, with writing being the next competency added across the curriculum. Work on improving the other competencies will be addressed in specific core courses for the present.

Factors that were considered in this decision included:

- The significance of this skill for all baccalaureate degree graduates.
- The relatively poor performance of TWU students on this skill in the 2007 CAAP exam.
- The fact that there are no individual courses devoted to teaching this skill.
- The need for this skill with effective reading, writing, and oral communication.
- The increasing public emphasis on skills such as critical thinking for graduates.
- The availability of resources for teaching this skill and of multiple instruments for assessing this skill.

The members recommended that:

1. Faculty development will be needed in order to make significant differences in teaching and learning for any of the competencies.
2. Time should be allowed to integrate the chosen competency into the curriculum and program learning outcomes of all undergraduate programs.
3. This proposal be reviewed by the Council of Chairs and Faculty Senate in order to increase support for the proposal and increase the overall success of efforts to improve critical thinking.
A preliminary survey of department chairs showed similar preferences for critical thinking (and writing) competencies.

2007-2009 Core Curriculum Requirements

I. Core Content Areas (course requirements)

- A. Communication (written composition)
- B. Mathematics
- C. Natural Sciences
- D. Humanities & Visual or Performing Arts
- E. Social and Behavioral Sciences
- F. Institutional Option Courses
 - 1. Multicultural Women’s Studies
 - 2. Math 1013 Quantitative Literacy

II. Core Competencies (skills integrated into core courses)

- A. Computer Literacy: Students must pass a designated computer science course or competency examination in computer literacy.
- B. Oral Communication: Students must pass a designated speech course or document successful completion of two or more evaluated oral presentations.
- C. Critical Thinking -applying both qualitative and quantitative skills analytically and creatively to subject matter in order to evaluate arguments, to construct alternative strategies, and to solve problems.
- D. Reading - Reading at the college level means the ability to analyze and interpret a variety of printed materials -- books, articles, and documents.
- E. Writing- Competency in writing is the ability to produce clear, correct, and coherent prose adapted to purpose, occasion, and audience.

TWU Critical Thinking and Essay Writing CAAP Scores - FALL 2007

	Raw Score		
	TWU Mean	Natl. Mean*	Natl. 75%ile
Freshman Critical Thinking	58.8		
Senior Critical Thinking	61.6	62.6	66.3
(100% = 80)			
	Raw Score		
	TWU Mean	Natl. Mean*	Natl. 75%ile
Freshman Essay Writing	3.2		
Senior Essay Writing	3.8	3.1	3.4
(100% = 6)			