

E.1.3 (Policy) Core Curriculum and Degrees

Responsible Department: Vice Chancellor for Academic Success

Adoption: 5-19-09

Last Board Action: 11-9-15

Degrees

The completion agenda of the Alamo Colleges (St. Philip's College, San Antonio College, Palo Alto College, Northwest Vista College, and Northeast Lakeview College) is focused on preparing students for their next educational or career step. For transfer students the intent is providing students with the state-mandated core curriculum, a stackable certificate leading toward the two-year degree, and flexibility to both pursue their areas of academic interest and maximize the number of credits they can transfer and that count toward a degree. Students pursuing technical skills have stackable program options to help them successfully enter the workforce and continue to enhance their lifelong educational progress. The intent of all certificates and degrees is alignment from the Texas public schools' endorsements to and through the Alamo Colleges through a college/university baccalaureate degree to a career.

Proactively taking steps to ensure that "every course counts" advances the Alamo Colleges' completion agenda by reducing the student's cost and time of attendance, lowering the cost to local and state taxpayers, and providing students with additional flexibility and opportunities to earn a two-year degree while maximizing the number of credits transferred toward a baccalaureate degree. The Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB) and the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC) have specific guidelines and requirements for institutions awarding associates degrees which provide the foundation for our curricular maps. At the state level, the Texas Legislature through HB5 83(R), HB 2628 84(R), HB 298 84(R) and SB1189 84(R) promote clear academic pathways for transfer degrees. In addition, the THECB 60x30 TX 2015-2030 Higher Education Strategic Plan for Texas calls for pathways and marketable skills in all programs offered. At the local level, the SA-TEC (Talent for Economic Competitiveness) is intended to create a pipeline into the workforce and meet employer needs. The Alamo Colleges need to be providing marketable skills for all programs. The majority of students need to work and the marketable skills allow students to continue working in the field they are pursuing but continue toward completion of the baccalaureate degree.

The Alamo Colleges' Associate of Arts (AA), Associate of Science (AS) and Associate of Arts in Teaching (AAT) awards are transfer-specific degrees. Within these degree types, students may select a concentration which serves as a pre-major for their further study at a senior institution. At Alamo Colleges, concentrations (pre-majors) align with the desired transfer university's Advising Guides to maximize the transfer of every Alamo Colleges course and are not equivalent to discipline-specific majors. The core curriculum (general education) requirement for these degrees is forty-two (42) hours and the remaining eighteen (18) hours will be considered elective credits. As defined in the 60x30 TX 2015-2030 Texas Higher Education Strategic Plan, the Alamo Colleges' faculty will develop marketable skills for the core curriculum and collaborate with our university partners to develop 2+2 marketable skills for the baccalaureate degree. Students may "bundle" these elective credits to align with their desired university's Advising Guide to ensure full course transfer. Students who complete an Advising Guide containing at least 60 hours from a college/university with which the Alamo Colleges has an articulation agreement may be awarded a degree. Students must consult with their advisor so that their educational and employment goals are productively and proactively addressed.

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The pre-major designation provides students with the greatest flexibility to customize their course schedule and program to meet both their academic interest areas and the specific requirements of their intended transfer institution. All Alamo Colleges are to be in alignment with this nomenclature and structure to ensure a consistent experience for students. Program assessment, a requirement of SACSCOC, will occur at the degree level.

The Associate of Applied Science (AAS) degrees and certificates, intended for specific workforce skills attainment, have discipline-specific majors. The stackable certificates and AAS degree may require at least 50 percent or a preponderance of academic courses based on demand in the service area. In such cases, the development of the program(s) must meet the requirements described in the THECB Guidelines for Instructional Programs in Workforce Education (GIPWE) which allows a program to include a preponderance of academic courses as recommended by the program advisory committee with academic and workforce skills, knowledge, and abilities identified by industry partners. In order to assist our students, the majority who must work, to facilitate their having the financial resources they need, and to provide employers with skilled employees, an alternative option is available. When an Advisory Committee validates that the two-year AA or AS degree provides the marketable skills needed by employers and at least one university will accept the program requirements toward a baccalaureate degree, the colleges of the Alamo Colleges will, either in conjunction with state or national certification or through the establishment of a local certification with area employers, develop the marketable skills and the colleges will award an official marketable skills certificate along with the AA/AS degree to facilitate employment, career entry, and completion of the baccalaureate degree just as we currently provide for certificate/AAS graduates.

The colleges of the Alamo Colleges confer AA, AS, and AAT degree awards for transfer rather than discipline-specific awards. SACSCOC has notified the Alamo Colleges that it is not appropriate to designate pre-majors, transfer concentrations or the equivalent on student diplomas and transcripts. Students earning a transfer degree under catalog requirements beginning with the 2016-2017 academic year will have Associate of Arts, Associate of Science, or Associate of Arts in Teaching degree posted on their publically-released academic records. The Field-of-study curricula, a THECB approved sequence of courses that provide a state-wide guarantee of transfer to any public college or university in Texas and apply toward the relevant degree program, will be posted on the publically-released academic record. All Alamo Colleges will be in alignment with this policy to ensure a consistent, high-quality experience for students.

Graduate Guarantee Program

The Chancellor shall develop and promulgate procedures to implement institutional graduate guarantees for Associate of Applied Science Degrees and Certificates of Completion awarded by each of the colleges in the College District.

Honorary Associates Degree

The Board may award an Honorary Associates Degree to an individual in recognition of:

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1. Extraordinary achievements in the fields of public affairs, the sciences, humanities and the arts, scholarship, education, business, philanthropy, or social services which exemplify the mission and vision of the College District;
2. Outstanding public service to the College District, the community, the state of Texas, or to humanity at large; or
3. Distinction through significant contributions to the economy or society at large.

Current employees, Trustees and other incumbent elected officials are not eligible for consideration for the Honorary Associates Degree.

The award may be initiated by the Board in consultation with the Chancellor and the respective college President, or nominees may be recommended through a college President to the Chancellor for review by an ad hoc committee of the Board. Nominations recommended by the ad hoc committee will be presented to the Board for consideration. The Board shall determine which nominees shall receive the Honorary Associates Degree.

Procedure [E.1.3.1](#) Honorary Associates Degree

Form [E.1.3.1.F](#) Nomination for Honorary Associates Degree

Legal Reference - TACC Policy Reference Manual

EFA(LEGAL) - Curriculum Design: Instructional Programs and Courses

EFAA(LEGAL) - Instructional Programs and Courses: Academic Courses

EFAB(LEGAL) - Instructional Programs and Courses: Career Technical and Workforce Courses

EFB(LEGAL) - Curriculum Design: Degrees and Certificates

EGA(LEGAL) - Academic Achievement: Grading and Credit

EI(LEGAL) - Testing Programs