

Texas A&M University-Kingsville

**Responses to H.B. 1172
Timely Graduation Report Requirements
November 2007**

This report has been prepared in compliance with Section 1, H.B. 1172 of the Texas Education Code. It provides data on undergraduates completing programs at Texas A&M University-Kingsville and information on efforts to promote timely graduations. The format for this report follows the format recommended by the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board.

1. For each undergraduate degree program, the average number of semester credit hours attempted and the average number of fall and spring semesters attended by a student completing the program.

Average Credit Hours Attempted and Mean Number of Semesters Attended for Completion of a Baccalaureate Degree in Designated Program Areas.*

Degree Program	# Graduates	Credit Hours Attempted	Semesters Attended
Science and Math	51	170	11
Agriculture	38	164	10
Arts and Architecture	122	160	11
Business	90	162	11
Engineering	84	169	11
Health	15	162	11
Social Sciences & Service	188	164	11
Total Graduates	588		
Institutional Average		164	11

* Source: Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board

2. The specific efforts implemented to ensure that undergraduate students graduate in a timely manner.

Texas A&M University-Kingsville is committed to providing undergraduate students with high-quality degree programs, while ensuring that students graduate in a timely manner. To meet this goal the university has continued with its previously reported efforts (Timely Graduation Report Requirements; November 2006), and has also sought/implemented additional strategies for reducing the number of credit hours attempted and/or semesters attended by undergraduate students in attaining a degree. The specific efforts are detailed below.

A. To ensure that undergraduate students graduate in a timely manner.

The Provost appointed a Student Success Task Force to identify barriers to the timely graduation of Texas A&M University-Kingsville students. The 14-member task force, drawn from faculty, professional staff, and the student body, submitted its final report and recommendations to the Provost in July, 2007. Specific recommendations and proposed solutions are described under the appropriate subheadings.

- All academic departments have examined the requirements for degree programs in order to minimize the time-to-degree while remaining competitive, and within accreditation limits set by individual professional bodies. Proposals for reducing the number of credit hours needed for degree completion have been formulated by departments. It is anticipated that the proposed reductions in degree plan requirements will be approved by the University Curriculum Committee and Provost by December 2007.
- The University's General Education Committee recommended reducing the core curriculum to 42 to 44 hours. The recommendation was approved by the University Curriculum Committee, the Academic Deans' Council, and President. It is anticipated that it will be approved by the A&M System Board of Regents by December 2007.
- The Academic Deans Council and University Curriculum Committee approved reduction of the university's requirement for 45 hours of junior/senior courses to the state minimum of 36 hours.
- With the approval and implementation of the proposed changes above, it is anticipated that approximately 95% of Texas A&M University-Kingsville's degrees will consist of 120 hours. The remaining degree plans will require 128 or fewer hours, and further reduction is limited by the need to meet the requirements of professional accrediting agencies.
- The university continues to provide supplemental instruction to students in courses identified as "barrier" courses (e.g., mathematics and English) in the first year of college. The Learning Assistance Center provides free tutoring to students in freshman writing, mathematics, science, and writing-intensive core curriculum courses. In addition, more comprehensive tutoring services (SmartThink.com) will be offered to students by November 1, 2007.
- The enrollment management staff and deans continue to work on establishing high-quality articulation agreements with community colleges and to effectively promote them at the community college level.
- To facilitate students taking an increased number of semester credit hours per semester, the university will continue efforts to develop and offer additional online courses and degrees.

B. To ensure that undergraduate students do not attempt an excessive number of semester credit hours beyond the minimum required to complete the students' degree programs.

- The Partners for Success consortium with Del Mar College continues to provide needed remediation to those students least prepared for college so that skills can be developed and students can advance more quickly (with fewer failures) into University College developmental education and/or a discipline-specific field of study.
- All new freshmen are required to take a College Success Series course (e.g., 1201) where they receive detailed information about degree requirements, curricula, and course rotations in an effort to increase student understanding of the requirements for degree completion and to limit the number of semester credit hours attempted that do not apply to the student's degree. Based on the recommendation of the Time-to-Degree and Student Success Task Forces the university continues to standardize and strengthen the content of the 1201 courses through coordinated training and preparation of the instructors. In fall 2007, a common textbook pilot program was implemented to standardize the delivery of content aimed at improving student learning in the first year of college.
- Academic advisors explain the cost of dropping classes and repeating classes with particular attention to the new Six-Drop Policy approved by the Texas legislature. Students are counseled regarding the repercussions of dropping courses and advised accordingly.
- An academic advising fee was implemented in fall 2007 to provide support for additional academic advisors, advisor professional development, and the purchase of computer software and hardware in support of academic advising. With the support of new professional advisors (M.S./M.A. preferred; B.S./B.A. required in a discipline within the College), all lower-division students are required to meet with an academic advisor each semester. This required advising policy will assist students to make wise academic choices, thus enhancing their short- and long-term academic success.
- Students who satisfy degree requirements with no more than three credit hours in excess of the minimum number of hours required by the degree are encouraged to apply for a tuition rebate of \$1,000.

C. To provide academic counseling concerning timely graduation.

- Effective fall 2007, a mandatory freshman academic advising policy was implemented. This policy requires that all freshman students must meet with an academic advisor in their college before registering for classes or making any changes to their class schedules (e.g., additions or withdrawals). This process will not only help students make wise academic choices, but will also serve as the basis for informing students of the new Six-Drop policy.
- Additional academic advisors are being hired at the College level to increase student access to timely advice regarding course selection and progress towards degree completion. These advisors have been hired with revenues from a new academic advising fee which was implemented in fall 2007.

- Effective for spring 2008 registration, A&M-Kingsville will have access to College Scheduler, an online program which enables students to develop high-quality class schedules tailored to their academic and personal needs. Working with the academic advisors, the class scheduling process will be streamlined. This will allow students and advisors to invest more time in discussions of career development and future opportunities, an important element of academic advising which can be lost when excessive time is spent on schedule building.
- For freshmen, advisors continue to review registrations to ensure that students are registering for advised courses. In addition, academic advisors contact new students throughout their first year to check on progress and identify any problems early.
- The importance of timely graduation is discussed with parents and students during student orientation.
- The academic advising staff members in University College monitor student completion of Texas Success Initiative requirements and advise students accordingly so they may complete the need for remediation in a timely fashion.
- Student progress toward degree completion is tracked by academic and faculty advisors, and students are counseled on the selection of appropriate courses.
- An Early Alert program has been implemented to identify students at risk of academic failure earlier in the semester. Faculty and staff share Early Alert reports with the University College Academic Advising Center. Students identified via this process are contacted and counseled accordingly. At the end of the fifth week of each semester, faculty submit grades for all lower-division and developmental education classes (this Early Grade Report) is used to identify students at risk of not achieving Satisfactory Academic Progress, defined as 12 SCH per long semester with a minimum GPA ≥ 2.00 . These students are contacted and receive appropriate advice regarding improving their academic performance.

D. To develop an online student degree progress report which compares the courses taken and credit received by a student to the courses completed and needed for degree and graduation requirements for each academic term.

- Texas A&M University-Kingsville has installed SCT Banner, an enterprise student information system. The university is in the process of hiring a Degree Audit Coordinator to develop the online degree audit component which will evaluate completed course work, courses in progress, and transferred credits and determine student progress toward degree completion. The Degree Audit Coordinator will work with the advising staff in individual colleges, and it is anticipated that full implementation of the degree audit component across all degree programs will be completed by Spring 2009.

E. To implement tuition policies that encourage timely graduation.

- Effective fall 2007, Texas A&M University-Kingsville implemented a flat-rate designated tuition policy as one element of a campus-wide policy aimed at

keeping college affordable. Full-time students (defined as registering for 12 SCH or more) do not pay additional designated tuition costs as they register for additional courses. This strategy provides students with an incentive to register and complete more SCH per semester, and thus enhance timely degree completion.

- Effective fall 2007, Texas A&M University-Kingsville has frozen on-campus housing and food service rates for incoming students who remain on campus continuously throughout their college career. As an example, an incoming fall 2007 freshman is guaranteed the residence hall-specific rate for the current semester throughout their undergraduate career. This policy was implemented given that it helps keep college affordable, and is aligned with a strategy known to have a positive impact on student success (i.e., living on campus).
- Students are charged an additional \$100 per credit hour for courses which are repeated the third and subsequent times.
- Students are charged an additional \$100 per credit hour for courses which exceed the allowable limit beyond their degree plans (currently 30 hours).

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1. For each undergraduate degree program, the average number of semester credit hours attempted and the average number of fall and spring semesters attended by a student completing the program.

Average Credit Hours Attempted and Mean Number of Semesters Attended for Completion of a Baccalaureate Degree in Designated Program Areas.*

Degree Program	# Graduates	Credit Hours Attempted	Semesters Attended
Science and Math	65	160	10
Agriculture	43	169	11
Arts and Architecture	154	168	11
Business	107	164	12
Engineering	73	175	12
Health	17	170	11
Social Sciences & Service	153	166	11
Technology	20	164	11
Total Graduates	632		
Institutional Average		167	11

* Source: Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board

2. The specific efforts implemented to ensure that undergraduate students graduate in a timely manner.

A&M Kingsville is committed to providing undergraduate students with high-quality degree programs, while ensuring that students graduate in a timely manner. To meet this goal the university has continued with its previously reported efforts (Timely Graduation Report Requirements; November 2005), and has also sought/implemented additional strategies for reducing the number of credit hours attempted and/or semesters attended by undergraduate students in attaining a degree. The specific efforts are detailed below.

A. *To ensure that undergraduate students graduate in a timely manner.*

- The Provost appointed a Time-to-Degree Task Force to study the time it takes for A&M Kingsville students to complete undergraduate degrees and to provide recommendations for ways to shorten this time. The 14-member task force, drawn from faculty, professional staff, and the student body, submitted its final report and recommendations to the Provost in July, 2006. The full text of this report is available at:
http://tamuk.edu/academicaffairs/pdf/time_to_degree_strategy_report.pdf
Specific recommendations and their current status are described under the appropriate subheadings.
- All academic departments have examined the requirements for degree programs in order to minimize the time-to-degree while remaining competitive, and within accreditation limits set by individual professional bodies. Proposals for reducing the number of credit hours needed for degree completion have been formulated by departments. These proposals are currently in the process of being (or have been) reviewed and approved by the respective department and college curriculum committees. It is anticipated that the proposed reductions in degree plan requirements will be approved by the University Curriculum Committee and Provost by Fall 2007.
- The Time-to-Degree Task Force recommended reducing the General Education Core Curriculum from 45 to 42 hours. The recommendation was endorsed by the Academic Deans Council, and it is anticipated that it will be approved by the University's General Education Committee and Provost.
- The Academic Deans Council has recommended that the University Curriculum Committee consider reducing the university's requirement for 45 hours of junior/senior courses to the state minimum of 36 hours.
- With the approval of the proposed changes above, it is anticipated that approximately 90% of A&M Kingsville's degrees will consist of approximately 120 hours. The remaining degree plans will require 128 or fewer hours, and further reduction is limited by the need to meet the requirements of professional accrediting agencies.
- The university continues to provide supplemental instruction to students in courses identified as "barrier" courses (e.g., mathematics and English) in the first year of college. In addition, the Learning Assistance Center provides free tutoring to students in these courses.
- The enrollment management staff and deans continue to work on establishing high-quality articulation agreements with community colleges and to effectively promote them at the community college level.
- To facilitate students taking an increased number of semester credit hours per semester, the university will continue efforts to develop and offer additional online courses and degrees.

B. To ensure that undergraduate students do not attempt an excessive number of semester credit hours beyond the minimum required to complete the students' degree programs.

- The Project I Can (PIC) consortium with Coastal Bend College continues to provide needed remediation to those students least prepared for college so that skills can be developed and students can advance more quickly (with fewer failures) into University College developmental education and/or a discipline-specific field of study.
- All new freshman are required to take a College Success Series course (e.g., 1201) where they receive detailed information about degree requirements, curricula, and course rotations in an effort to increase student understanding of the requirements for degree completion and to limit the number of semester credit hours attempted that do not apply to the student's degree. Furthermore, based on the recommendation of the Time-to-Degree Task Force the university will continue to standardize and strengthen the content of the 1201 courses through coordinated training and preparation of the instructors.
- Academic advisors explain the cost of dropping classes and repeating classes. After the automatic Q drop date, students must get signatures from advisors and instructors to drop classes thereby providing opportunities for intervention. Students are informed that they must pay an additional \$100 per credit hour for courses repeated the third and subsequent times.
- Based on the recommendation of the Time-to-Degree Task Force, the Provost has appointed a university committee to study and report on the impact of limiting the credit hour requirements needed for a minor.
- Students who satisfy degree requirements with no more than three credit hours in excess of the minimum number of hours required by the degree are encouraged to apply for a tuition rebate of \$1,000.

C. To provide academic counseling concerning timely graduation.

- Currently, freshman in most colleges are required to meet with the academic advisor a minimum of one time per semester (prior to the registration period). Based on the recommendation of the Time-to-Degree Task Force, the Academic Deans Council has endorsed mandatory advising for all freshman and new transfer students. This will be accomplished by blocking the student's ability to register for courses until they are permitted by the appropriate advisor. It is anticipated that this recommendation will be implemented by Fall 2007.
- At present, most colleges have hired professional academic advisors who emphasize time to graduation by encouraging students to attempt a minimum of 15 hours per semester. Furthermore, students on financial aid are counseled to take a load sufficient to complete their degree on time, thereby minimizing the amount of loans incurred. To further improve academic counseling for students, the Academic Deans Council has endorsed the implementation of an advising fee (\$25 per semester). Revenues generated from this fee will be used

to hire additional professional academic advisors and to provide additional training for all academic advisors and staff. The proposed advising fee has been forwarded to the President and President's Council for consideration and approval. It is anticipated that the fee will be approved and implemented in Fall 2007.

- For freshman, advisors continue to review registrations to ensure that students are registering for advised courses. In addition, academic advisors contact new students throughout their first year to check on progress and identify any problems early.
- The importance of timely graduation is discussed with parents and students during student orientation.
- The academic advising staff members in University College monitor student completion of Texas Success Initiative requirements and advise students accordingly so they may complete the need for remediation in a timely fashion.
- Student progress toward degree completion is tracked by academic and faculty advisors and students are counseled on the selection of appropriate courses.

D. To develop an online student degree progress report which compares the courses taken and credit received by a student to the courses completed and needed for degree and graduation requirements for each academic term.

- A&M Kingsville has installed SCT Banner, an enterprise student information system. The university has recently hired a Degree Audit Coordinator to develop the online degree audit component which will evaluate completed course work, courses in progress, and transferred credits and determine student progress toward degree completion. The Degree Audit Coordinator is currently working with the advising staff in individual colleges, and it is anticipated that full implementation of the degree audit component across all degree programs will be completed by Spring 2008.

E. To implement tuition policies that encourage timely graduation.

- The Time-to-Degree Task Force recommended establishing a flat tuition rate at 14 credit hours (i.e., no additional designated tuition will be charged for hours taken beyond 14 hours). The recommendation was endorsed by the Academic Deans Council, and has been forwarded to the President and President's Council for consideration and approval. If approved, the flat tuition rate will be implemented in Fall 2007. Communication with current students regarding this change will be coordinated by staff in Public Affairs, Student Affairs, Enrollment Management, and the academic advisors. New students will be informed of this policy by staff in Student Affairs and University College during the university's "Hoggie Days" orientation.
- Students are charged an additional \$100 per credit hour for courses which are repeated the third and subsequent times.
- Students are charged an additional \$100 per credit hour for courses which exceed the allowable limit beyond their degree plans (currently 30 hours).