

Texas Tech University
Report to the Texas Tech University System Board of Regents
And
The Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board
Timely Graduation Measures at Texas Tech University
November 20, 2007

This is the second part of the required report, the focus of which is the collection of efforts taken by Texas Tech University to promote timely graduation at the undergraduate level. The first part of the required report chronicles data on undergraduates completing degrees and is submitted by the Office of Institutional Research and Information Management.

Undergraduate higher education is an opportunity for individuals to select a program of study leading to a degree. At Texas Tech, this process involves successful completion of the state mandated Core Curriculum and enumerated courses in the specific degree program. Students frequently shift their interest in a degree program, sometimes accumulating more than a minimum number of hours and spending therefore more time in the completion of their final program. This is normal. The State has recently enacted several statutes designed to encourage more timely graduation. The Coordinating Board is charged with establishing the rules for these measures. They include a limitation on the number of hours one may accumulate beyond the degree plan while paying resident tuition. There is also a call to reduce bachelors' degree programs to 120 hours, the minimum set by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools. And this last legislative session a limit on the number of courses an undergraduate can drop while still paying resident tuition was set at six. In fact, Texas Tech has served as the model for several of these state-wide incentives to graduate on time. To the extent that Texas Tech can assist students to make steady progress toward a more timely completion of their undergraduate degree, several measure are in place:

- The minimum number of hours required by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools for a bachelor's degree is 120. All degree granting programs have recently examined their requirements in order to minimize the time-to-degree while remaining competitive and within accreditation limits set by their individual professional bodies. At present, 100 of TTU's 117 undergraduate degrees consist of 128 or fewer hours and should be completed in four years, assuming a normal course load totaling 32 hours per calendar year. TTU has strongly urged undergraduates to select and complete this normal course load. In fact, the average number of hours per semester take by new TTU freshmen has increased since this and other incentives to graduate on time have been implemented from 13.25 in 2002 to 14.56 in 2007).
- A number of regulations have been implemented beginning in the fall of 2004. These include:
 - Freshmen may drop only four courses during their undergraduate years; transfer students may drop only three. The state statute calls for a limit of
 - 6 drops. TTU's policy is more strict for freshmen.

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- No course may be repeated if the student earns a grade of C or above.
 - Students taking a course for the third time will pay an increased designated tuition fee.
 - The deadline to drop a course has been shortened to the 45th class day.
 - The grade of I (Incomplete) will automatically turn into an F if not completed within one calendar year.
- TTU has hired an additional 3 academic advisors in 2006-07, making a total to date of 245 undergraduate advisors and 77 graduate advisors.
 - The Core Curriculum is constantly monitored by the General Education Committee to ensure that each course meets the learning outcomes specified in the CORE.
 - Every course at TTU now carries enumerated learning outcomes and modes of assessment.
 - Transfer from other institutions has been streamlined thanks to Field of Study initiatives and partnership agreements with two year colleges. Texas Tech currently has 46 such partnerships in Texas, with over 100 campuses, and one each in New Mexico and Oklahoma.
 - Academic Support Services have been greatly expanded. See pp. 53-55 of the current *Texas Tech University Undergraduate and Graduate Catalog, 2007-08*. These include:
 - PASS learning Center (tutoring, skills building.
 - Supplemental Instruction (additional time available for students in selected courses, e.g., physics, chemistry, mathematics [calculus].)
 - The Missouri Club (Show Me), to assist students in mathematics courses.
 - The University Writing Center, to assist students in writing in all their courses. The UWC saw 3913 students in 2006-07.
 - Mentor Tech, to assist minority students.
 - AccessTech to assist students with disabilities.
 - TECHniques Center, to assist students with learning disabilities.
 - The Marsha Sharp Center for student athletes.

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- Academic Testing Services, providing CLEP exams to assist in timely graduation.
 - Language Learning Lab and Resource Center, to assist students studying other languages.
 - Student Counseling Center
 - ACTT and Discovery, to assist students with academic decisions.
- Various “Academic Boot Camp” programs assist freshmen to successfully launch their undergraduate studies. These include:
 - IS 1100: The Freshman Seminar (begun in 1991, this voluntary program regularly enrolls 1/3 of the freshman class).
 - First Year Experience (FYE) in the Honors College
 - The Bridge Program in the College of Engineering
 - Orientation and skills building courses in the Colleges of Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources, Human Sciences, and The Rawls College of Business Administration.
 - The mandatory XL Program, Strategies for Learning, emphasizes study skills for freshmen who did not achieve a 2.0 gap their first semester and for all students returning from academic suspension.
 - Internships and capstone courses in most majors.
 - Widespread publicizing of the state mandated B-On-Time Loan and \$1000 Rebate programs which encourage timely graduation.
 - The centerpiece of TTU’s commitment to a timely graduation is the optional **Graduate On Time Contract**, designed to maintain frequent advisor/student meetings so that students make wise course selections and steady progress. The University sees to it that required courses are available for students to make uninterrupted progress toward timely completion of their degrees. The Senior Advisor for Academic Advising is the point of contact for this program. Tech’s GOT program, the first in the state, was the model for a state wide program enacted by the 79th Legislature in SB 30. The number of new freshmen signing the contract so far this year (June-November) is up 103% from the previous year.

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This combination of timely graduation programs is paying significant dividends. TTU awarded 6144 degrees in 2006-07, of which 4622 were bachelors degrees, an all time high. The freshman to sophomore retention rate has increased over the last few years to 82.6% for 2006-07. The bachelor degree graduation rate has increased from 53% in 2002 to 60.86% in 2006-07. Throughout the university, there is a heightened awareness of timely and increased graduation. We are doing a better job of graduating our students in a timely manner, but it is noteworthy that those students are taking fewer total student credit hours to complete their degrees. This means there are fewer formula driven hours generating fewer state dollars.

Our Chancellor's goal to reach 40,000 students by 2020 means that we will not only have to recruit more students, but that we must see to it our retention and graduation of these students is increased. Sound academic advising and effective academic support services are keys in reaching this goal.

Prepared by:

James E. Brink
Senior Vice Provost for Academic Affairs

Texas Tech University

Report to the Texas Tech University System Board of Regents
And

The Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board

Timely Graduation Measures at Texas Tech University

November 16, 2006

This is the second part of the required report, the focus of which is the collection of efforts taken by Texas Tech University (TTU) to promote timely graduation at the undergraduate level. The first part of the required report chronicles data on undergraduates completing degrees and is submitted by the Office of Institutional Research and Information Management.

Undergraduate higher education is an opportunity for individuals to select a program of study leading to a bachelor's degree. At Texas Tech, this process involves successful completion of the state mandated Core Curriculum and enumerated courses in the specific degree program. Students frequently shift their interest in a degree program, sometimes accumulating more than a minimum number of hours and spending therefore more time in the completion of their final program. This is normal. However, to the degree that Texas Tech can assist students to make steady progress toward a more timely completion of their undergraduate degree, the following measures are in place:

- The minimum number of hours required by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools for a bachelor's degree is 120. All academic departments have recently examined the requirements for their degree programs in order to minimize the time-to-degree while remaining competitive and within accreditation limits set by their individual professional bodies. At present, 71% of TTU's 117 undergraduate degrees consist of 128 or fewer hours and should be completed in four years, assuming a normal course load totaling 32 hours per calendar year. TTU has strongly urged undergraduates to select and complete this normal course load. In fact, the average number of hours per semester taken by TTU freshmen has increased since this and other incentives to graduate on time have been implemented (13.25 in 2002 to 14.3 in fall 2006).

- A number of regulations have been implemented beginning in the fall of 2004. These include:
 - *Freshmen may drop only four courses during their undergraduate years; transfer students may drop only three
 - *No course may be repeated if the student earns a grade of C or above
 - *Students taking a course for the third time will pay an increased designated tuition fee
 - *The deadline to drop a course has been shortened to the 45th class day
 - *The grade of I (Incomplete) will automatically turn into an F if not completed within one calendar year. This encourages eventual completion of incomplete courses.
- TTU has hired an additional 27 academic advisors, making a total to date of 178.
- A Senior Administrator for Academic Advising was appointed in the Spring of 2006 to coordinate all undergraduate advising and train new advisors.
- An Advising Task Force Report was completed in September 2006. Among its recommendations are professionalization of academic advising.
- The Core Curriculum is constantly monitored by the General Education Committee to ensure that each course meets the learning outcomes specified in the Core. The GEC reports to both the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board and the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools.
- Every course at TTU now carries enumerated learning outcomes and modes of assessment.
- Transfer from other institutions has been streamlined thanks to Field of Study initiatives and 47 partnership agreements with two year colleges.
- Academic Support Services have been greatly expanded. See pp. 52-54 of the current *Texas Tech University Undergraduate and Graduate Catalog, 2006-07*. These include:
 - *PASS learning Center (tutoring, skills building)
 - *Supplemental Instruction (additional review sections available for students in selected courses)
 - *The Missouri Club (Show Me), to assist students in mathematics courses
 - *The University Writing Center
 - *Mentor Tech, to assist minority students
 - *Student Disabilities Services to assist students with disabilities
 - *TECHniques Center to assist students with learning disabilities
- Various “Academic Boot Camp” programs assist freshmen to successfully launch their undergraduate studies. These include:

- *IS 1100: The Freshman Seminar (begun in 1991, this voluntary program regularly enrolls 1/3 of the freshman class)
- *First Year Experience (FYE) in the Honors College
- *The Bridge Program in the College of Engineering
- *Orientation and skills building courses in the Colleges of Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources, Human Sciences, and The Rawls College of Business Administration.

- The mandatory XL Program to emphasize study skills for freshmen who did not achieve a 2.0 GPA during their first semester and students returning from academic suspension.
- Internships and capstone courses in most majors.
- Widespread publicizing of the state mandated B-On-Time Loan and \$1000 Rebate programs which encourage timely graduation.
- The centerpiece of TTU's commitment to a timely graduation is the optional **Graduate On Time Contract (GOT)**, designed to maintain frequent advisor/student meetings so that students make wise course selections and steady progress. The University sees to it that required courses are available for students to make uninterrupted progress toward timely completion of their degrees. The Senior Advisor for Academic Advising is the point of contact for the GOT program. Texas Tech will participate as a pilot program for the State mandated Senate Bill 30 of the 79th Legislature calling for Timely Graduation in all state universities. Texas Tech's GOT Program, the first in the state, was the model for SB30.

This combination of timely graduation programs is paying significant dividends. TTU awarded 5,923 degrees in 2005-06, an all time high. The freshman to sophomore retention rate has increased steadily over the past few years, from 82% in 2004 to 83% in 2006. The bachelor degree graduation rate has increased from 53% in 2002 to 56% in 2006. Throughout the university there is a heightened awareness of timely and increased graduation. On several fronts increased retention is seen as one obvious way to our goals of increased enrollments and higher graduation rates. Sound academic advising and effective academic support services are the keys to these goals.

Prepared by: James E. Brink
Senior Vice Provost for Academic Affairs

Texas Tech University

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The Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board

Timely Graduation Measures at Texas Tech University

November 30, 2005

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