

University of North Texas
Efforts to Help Students Graduate More Quickly

Instructions: Regarding the directive to report timely graduation efforts, the Coordinating Board suggested that institutions provide a brief (one to two paragraph) response to the specific statements in the legislation that are bulleted below. The summary response is required to be sufficiently detailed to give legislators and others a general impression of your activities.

The legislation requires information on efforts implemented:

- To ensure that undergraduate students graduate in a timely manner, and
- To provide academic counseling concerning timely graduation.

UNT has **extensive freshmen orientation options** available to new students with special activities that encourage graduation in a timely manner. Orientation has been expanded to include the whole freshman year experience with programming to enhance the first year transition and increased connectivity with the campus including knowledge about available academic and student development resources. **Advising** is an integral part of orientation and both are required for all new undergraduate students. Orientation includes additional information about various majors, distribution of course planning guide documents with pre-requisites, costs, financial/debt management, and financial assistance to pay for college. A pilot project to develop an advising handbook is underway in the College of Arts and Science where undecided majors are advised. Specific advisors work with undecided majors to focus on completing core requirements and counsel these students on various majors and requirements specific to those academic programs.

UNT also implemented an advising fee several years ago and has used the funds generated to develop a **core of professional advisors** who supplement faculty advising. The goal has been to continuously reduce the number of students served by individual advisors to insure quality time can be spent with students to assist them with career and major choices that best suit their skills, abilities, and financial circumstances. Advisors are expected to initiate contacts with new students to insure that they are taking advantage of resources in the Learning Center. The Learning Center is located in the University Union and Kerr Hall and provides services like tutoring, study skills courses, and Supplemental Instruction. Other resources include the Writing Center, open tutoring laboratories in academic departments, mentoring opportunities, TRIO programs, developmental/career counseling, and residence hall peer advising coordinated with academic advisors. Through a contractual agreement with North Central Texas College (NCTC) additional developmental math courses are taught on UNT Denton campus by NCTC faculty. These pre-algebra courses help students who failed the math portion of the THEA exam to get remediation to strengthen basic math skills and complete requirements at a lower cost while continuing their other course work at UNT. All these programs are designed to promote student success and graduation in a timely manner.

Summer school schedule now includes a May-mini semester to provide three summer course scheduling options for students. In 2005 a complete re-design of the course offering format

now provides six sessions within a single summer term to further enhance opportunities for students to decrease time to graduation. Online courses are also available at the undergraduate level and constitute approximate 4% of credit hours taken. Data indicates that students enrolled in online courses average taking one additional credit hour per semester as compared to those students only enrolled in traditional classes.

With the recent implementation of a new **enterprise administrative information system** (EIS), the majority of all enrollment related services can be transacted by students via a secure user ID and password over the internet. The student portal, *MyUNT.edu*, is available in a near 24x7 environment and contains a “To Do” list that allows administrators to assign tasks for students as a reminder to ensure that deadlines, for example, like advising requirements, are met in a timely manner. This feature improves communications with students by increasing awareness and enhancing information about important business and academic responsibilities.

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

Orientation includes information about the **Tuition Rebate Program** that entitles students who graduate within three hours of the required hours for their degree programs to receive a \$1,000 rebate at graduation. Advisors reinforce this option at every opportunity. For the 2004-2005 academic year 371 applicants received \$142,000 dollars in rebates, which was a 16% increase over the 2001-2002 time period.

Academic policy now includes an **Academic Alert** status which is designed to warn students who are having academic difficulty that they are required to see an advisor before the next enrollment period and that probation is eminent if action is not taken. Advisors use this status information to initiate contact with students to counsel them about what can be done to improve their academic status to avoid probation. In these counseling sessions advisors discuss course duplication policies, academic status consequences, and assessment of degree progress and/or choice of major. Since Academic Alert was implemented, the **freshman to sophomore retention rate** increased from 69% to 74%!

Summer 2004 some 3,200 of our students took courses at another institution in Texas for use toward UNT degree requirements. The majority of those enrollments were freshmen and sophomores taking courses at community colleges in the north Texas region near their home. A new web based **Course Applicability System** (CAS) was implemented spring 2005 to aid advisors and students in selecting courses at other institutions that will clearly transfer to UNT and apply to specific degree programs. This program benefits new freshmen and transfer students from a cost and time to degree completion perspective. This system is integrated with our degree audit and equivalency systems. The Coordinating Board’s Transfer Advisory Council considers UNT the pilot project for possible use of CAS as a statewide model to facilitate transfer activities.

- 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.

UNT began work to implement an online degree audit reporting system and manage transfer equivalencies in the mid 1990's. Rules for all undergraduate degree programs are monitored with each new catalog year, and course equivalencies for all public two-year colleges and a number of four-year institutions are maintained in the system. New from high school freshmen frequently enter UNT with college credits, this system provides them a transfer credit summary report similar to the one issued to new transfer students.

Advisors provide new and continuing students with a **degree audit report** which can be generated in a matter of minutes in the advisors office for use during a counseling session or by the student for self-advising needs. This report contains all degree requirements, courses completed, approved substitutions, courses in progress, and notes incomplete requirements to be met. Each semester after grade reporting, the newly completed courses are applied to degree requirements.

- To implement tuition policies that encourage timely graduation.

After the deregulation of designated tuition, a Tuition Task Force was created to evaluate various tuition models and options. A **block tuition model** based on a flat rate for fifteen hours or above is being considered for Fall 2006. UNT has also designated 20% (as opposed to the required 15%) of the tuition set aside to aid needy students in their efforts to graduate in a timely manner.

**Coordinating Board
Methodology**

Every student who earned a baccalaureate degree at a public general academic institution in FY 2004 was traced back for ten years (FY 1995-FY 2004) to find when he/she was reported as a first-time student. Only those with a first-time indicator were included in the analysis. For each of these students, the number of semester credit hours attempted was recorded (fall, spring and summer semesters), as well as the number of fall and spring semesters attended. The graduates were classified into broad fields based on the CIP Codes of their majors. The number of graduates by field, the average number of undergraduate credit hours attempted, and the average number of fall and spring semesters attended were calculated for each institution's graduates. The statewide results are shown below. (Table 1).

**Table 1
Time-to-Degree in Eight Program Categories for
All Texas Public General Academic Institutions**

General Program Areas	CIP Codes	Number of Graduates	Mean Semesters ¹	Mean Credits Attempted ²
Science & Math	03,11,26,27,40	4,746	10	149
Agriculture	1	1,477	10	152
Business	52	11,196	10	148
Engineering	14	2,544	10	151
Health	51	1,655	11	154
Liberal & Fine Arts and Architecture	04,05,09,10,16,22,23,24,25,29,30,38,50	12,261	10	149
Social Sciences and Service	12,19,31,42,43,44,45,54	10,396	10	147
Technology	15,41,46,47,48,49	636	11	163
Grand Mean		44,911	10	149

¹ Fall and spring semesters only.

² Semester credit hours attempted during fall, spring and summer semesters.

Table 2 (FICE CODE 003594)

UNIVERSITY OF NORTH TEXAS					
Average Credits Attempted and Mean Semesters toward Baccalaureate Degree in Program Areas					
Institution Name	FICE	Program	# Grads	Credits Attempted	Mean Semesters
UNIVERSITY OF NORTH TEXAS	003594	Science and Math	169	158	10
UNIVERSITY OF NORTH TEXAS	003594	Arts and Architecture	1073	153	10
UNIVERSITY OF NORTH TEXAS	003594	Business	763	155	11
UNIVERSITY OF NORTH TEXAS	003594	Health	54	157	11
UNIVERSITY OF NORTH TEXAS	003594	Social Sciences and Service	773	148	10
UNIVERSITY OF NORTH TEXAS	003594	Technology	16	177	11
Total Graduates			2848		
Institutional Average				153	10