

The University of Texas at San Antonio
Response to Section 1, H.B. 1172 Timely Graduation Report Requirements

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

During the Spring 2006 semester UTSA held a university-wide “Raising Graduation Rates Summit” that approximately 300 faculty and staff attended. The program included presentations by President Ricardo Romo, recognized experts in the area of student success, and Raymund Paredes, Commissioner of Higher Education.

The Provost appointed a Task Force for Student Success and Graduation, chaired by Vice Provost Williams: the Task Force completed deliberations Spring, 2006 and made recommendations during the Summer, 2006. In Fall, 2006, the Provost named an Associate Dean for Retention and Graduation, who is tasked with implementation of Task Force recommendations, oversight of policies affecting graduation rates, and reporting. Associate Vice Provost for Institutional Research hired an Assistant Vice Provost for Assessment to facilitate the development of student learning outcome assessment and assist in research regarding retention and graduation.

We have instituted a three-year course schedule so students can determine what they need to take when and adjust their work and family schedules accordingly in advance. In addition, College compacts include projections for anticipated enrollment for all courses taught so that adequate sections will be available for students who follow their degree plans.

The entire undergraduate curriculum was examined to identify courses beyond the Core Curriculum that provide a significant challenge to student progress toward degree completion. The Supplemental Instruction Program was expanded to provide support in these gateway courses needed for successful transition into subsequent courses in the major.

- **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.**

Institutional Research staff will research and provide a detailed analysis of student course taking patterns and courses that are presenting a roadblock to students progressing toward degree. In addition, the academic programs consisting of more than 120 semester hours will begin review of the curriculum to determine if requirements need revision.

- **To provide academic counseling concerning timely graduation.**

Executive Director for Advising has been hired: duties include oversight of all advising operations and advising policies, including training of advising staff to better utilize online degree audit program. During Fall 2006, all advising centers participated in a Majors’ Fair during Roadrunner Days, August 2006, and Sophomore Transition Fair, October 2006, to provide out reach to students and increased awareness of advising. Based on recommendations received from NACADA Consults and advisor turnover advisor salary and

the career ladder for advising is being reviewed and revamped, Fall 2006. The results of this revamping should lead to less advisor turnover thus leading to students being able to consistently meet with the same advisor leading to more relational/conceptual advising occurring. Advisors are working to implement the new UTSA policy that states that all UTSA students must complete a semester-by-semester degree plan with expected graduation date with their advisors by Fall 2007. All students on probation and returning after dismissal, as well as students in three colleges, are required to be advised each semester. UTSA is exploring whether resources are available to require all students to be advised each semester.

We have added academic sessions during the required freshman orientation that model small group interactions by presenting Supplemental Instruction sessions with lectures by professors and information on learning assistance and study skills.

- **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.**

One line degree plans have been available to UTSA students for some time. The Executive Director for Advising hired a consultant to upgrade online degree audits to make them more user friendly for students and advisors in Fall, 2006. This online degree audit will be used by all advisors to assist students in developing course schedules and in finalizing their degree audits for graduation.

- **To implement tuition policies that encourage timely graduation.**

Beginning Fall 2007, UTSA will implement an incentive program for students who take more hours and/or graduate within 4-5 years. A university-wide committee composed primarily of students is considering options for the program such as implementing a flat-rate tuition rate (Austin, Pan American); offering rebates prior to graduation (Dallas); free tuition during semester of graduation; or “locking-in” tuition rates for four years (UTEP).

The University of Texas at San Antonio
Response to Section 1, H.B. 1172 Timely Graduation Report Requirements

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

UTSA has a new director and two staff members in Institutional Research and a new director of Student Affairs Assessment and Strategic Planning. We have created a ‘think tank’ to develop critical questions regarding retention and graduation, and a systematic method of data collection, analysis, and feedback to UTSA policymakers in a useful format so that we can adjust policies, resources and programs to better meet student needs.

We are developing a three-year course schedule so students can determine what they need to take when and adjust their work and family schedules accordingly in advance. Courses taken by a majority of students in a major at a given point in time need to be taught in a block-schedule with other courses majors also need. In addition, College plans include projections for anticipated enrollment for all courses taught so that adequate sections will be available for students who follow their degree plans.

We are appointing a person to be assigned increasing retention and graduation rates as their primary function. Even though these issues are everyone’s concern, this person would view all priorities of the institution through the “persistence/graduation rate” lens to ensure that any planned changes either impact rates positively or not at all.

- **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.**

We have analyzed undergraduate curriculum for courses that serve as a ‘gateway’ to degree requirements for those courses that present significant challenges to student progress. Based on these findings, we are expanding the Supplemental Instruction (SI) program (a peer facilitated study group that incorporates course specific study skills along with course content), which has been our most effective strategy to increase student success. Consistently, student SI participants earn higher course GPAs and withdraw less often, which lowers the number of courses repeat for credit and promotes progression toward graduation.

- **To provide academic counseling concerning timely graduation.**

Advising Centers have offered extended and weekend hours during peak registration periods. We are establishing a transfer center to strengthen the system of transferring coursework to UTSA. Additionally, UTSA is examining enhancements to technology to facilitate communication between advisors and students.

- **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.**

We have implemented and are revising an automated degree checking program to provide accurate and timely information to students about degree requirements. Once this system is fully-functional, mandatory semester-by-semester degree plans with expected graduation date will be developed for all students with their advisors. In addition, all students will be required to develop degree plans with their advisors showing coursework to be taken each semester until graduation with an anticipated graduation date.

- **To implement tuition policies that encourage timely graduation.**

UTSA is studying the impact of increasing incentives for students who take more hours and/or graduate within 4-5 years; for example implementing a flat-rate tuition rate; offering a rebate to all students who graduate within 4 years; and offering opportunities for students to earn tuition credits that can be applied in their senior year if they meet certain criteria.