

VCT Report
TACC Distance Learning Advisory Committee
ACC Highland Business Center, Austin – June 23-24, 2005

ATTENDING:

Donnetta Suchon, Chair, Lee College	Richard Jolly, Midland College
John Ray, Vice-Chair, Brazosport College	Lee Sloan, Del Mar College
Randy Schormann, McLennan Community College	Belinda Newman, Collin County Community College
Carolyn Robertson, Tarrant County College	Ann Morris, Panola College
Debbie Huffman, North Central Texas College	Blaine Bennett, Southwest Texas Jr. College
Lance Zimmerman, TSTC Waco	Rey Garcia, TACC
Jim Palmer, Western Texas College	Henry Hartman, STARLINK
Tim Rockey, San Antonio College	Lisa Brown, STARLINK
Pam Quinn, Dallas Co. Comm. Col. District	Ron Thomson, VCT
Stan Solis, Howard College	Aleta Garcia, VCT
Dwight Chaney, Paris Junior College	

COMMITTEE BUSINESS

New Committee Members. Donnetta Suchon introduced and welcomed new members representing the north and west regions and Continuing Education. Dannette Toone has also joined the committee to replace a Central Texas representative who retired.

North Texas: Belinda Newman
Provost, Preston Ridge Campus
Collin County Community College

Continuing Education: Tim Rockey
TACE-President
San Antonio Col.

Debbie Huffman
Director of E-Learning
North Central Texas College

West Texas: Stan Solis
Director of Distance Learning
Howard College

Richard Jolly
Executive Vice President/VP Instruction
Midland College

Central Texas: Dannette Toone
Assoc VP Advancement, Business, and Community Education
Temple College

Members with Expiring Terms of Service: The following DLAC members fulfilled their terms of service, which concluded with the installation of the new DLAC members.

Jim Palmer, Western Texas College, West Region
Jenny Giron, El Paso Community College, West Region
Carolyn Robertson, Tarrant County College, North Region
Eddie Hadlock, North Central Texas College, North Region
Beverly Prichard, Midland College, Continuing Education

VCT STATUS REPORT

Ron Thomson reported that VCT had a sensitive moment with this legislative round of **funding**. It was touch and go but VCT pulled through. See below for further comments about this issue from Rey Garcia, President of TACC.

VCT **enrollments** continue to go up. They were slightly above 9,000 for the FY05 fiscal year. Due to the SACS review it is possible that next year will be a challenging year. Online courses continue to be overwhelmingly the main market in VCT.

VCT participation had a significant increase. In terms of hosting, the top 6 colleges account for 44% of the course enrollments. There is an enormous variation. 52% of the courses are being provided by 3 colleges.

Overall satisfaction with VCT was up from last year's to this year's **Coordinators' evaluation**. However Ron wondered what can we do to ensure that this evaluation is reflecting the real positions of the colleges? In the future, the current evaluation should be revised.

The **website** continues to get high marks. Major things that were added were the addition of syllabi to the course schedule. Another critical addition was the **Instructor Qualification summaries** which will be mandatory for all courses in the Fall 05 schedule. These summaries contain the same information that would be on a SACS faculty roster.

Online rosters and grade reports will hopefully be ready by next Spring but surely by next Summer. Instructors will be able to record their grades online.

The Consortium Agreement required by the U.S. Department of Education for colleges to give financial aid to students enrolled in courses through VCT has been sent to all colleges.

CONTINUING EDUCATION REPORT

Tim Rockey informed the group that CE is still not taking off with VCT and there are a number of reasons for that. The largest one being that CE is a profit center for the colleges. With VCT you have to share some of that profit around. It is something that can be overcome, but it is going to take some work. If we are going to do an online course it is easy to use "Ed to Go." CE is

pure profit when brokering those courses, so it is natural that colleges want to stay with that mode. However, courses in Real estate and food service are easy to transcript so we need to encourage our providers. Also, Ron noted that colleges have not developed many online CE courses that could be offered through VCT.

On a more positive note, Ron has been doing a lot of presentations on CE and VCT and the sessions are very well received. Bottom line: how we can convince both Hosts and Providers that VCT is a moneymaking operation for them? The nursing re-entry program should take off and be a big success. Ideas that were brainstormed by the group were:

- Shared classes
- Educate more CE administrators about VCT
- Re-energize the TACE Distance Learning committee

COLLABORATIVE DEGREE GRANTS: STATUS AND ISSUES OF PROJECTS AND NEW RFP

As we near completion of the first VCT grants, Pam Quinn remarked that there were challenges by her college to complete the Dallas projects with the amount of time and money given. It was reiterated that payment is contingent on successful completion of the project as written in the RFP.

Ron Thomson asked the DLAC committee to review the Materials Use Policy which would allow any college to use materials developed with grant funds. It was also decided that the completer issue needs to be included on the Coordinating Board Advisory Committee agenda. As CB rules are currently written, if a student starts a degree at ACC and transfers to Dallas, the student is a non-completer for ACC. That it is not attractive to ACC as the host. The CB needs to look at this and make a recommendation.

In regards to Collaborative Degrees, it was decided that these items would be posted at the website until further word comes from the Coordinating Board.

Collaborative Degree Program Information

- Programs available, under development, and searching for partners
- Courses in field of study
- Degree plans
- Admission requirements and selection process
- Key program contacts, e.g., chief instructional administrator, department chair
- Degrees/qualifications of a program's chair
- Information on required cohort groups, e.g., start/end dates

Individual colleges will enter their own degree/certificate program information at the website as they currently do for individual courses.

RFP FOR GRANTS 2005-2007 BIENNIUM

The new VCT grants RFP for developing degree programs for delivery through distance learning will be posted July 14th. That will give colleges three months to put partnerships together and to write proposals. After much discussion, the committee agreed to this timeline:

Timeline

Sept 30th: receive RFP's colleges

Oct. 30th: evaluate and select awardees

Nov 15th: notify awardees

This year the RFP will also address VCT participation and collaboration within VCT and outside of a college's region. The committee also decided that continuation grants for currently funded grant projects could submit an RFP and would not be excluded from consideration.

VCT ISSUES RAISED BY COORDINATORS AND OTHERS

A hot issue that has come up with colleges is **fees** for credit courses. There have been complaints from coordinators that some courses have gotten very expensive and there is no longer a standard. However, for the moment all that can be done is to refer them to the MOU. Rey Garcia stated that VCT operates as a free market.

In regards to grading policies, it was clarified that the Host college's local policies apply.

SACS STATEWIDE REVIEW OF VCT

Points Discussed

- The statewide review will occur only once. In the future, VCT will become part of the regular cyclical reaffirmation of accreditation.
- If a college elects not to participate in VCT during this review and then changes its decision at a later date, it will have to notify SACS and follow whatever procedure SACS establishes for colleges that don't participate in the statewide review.
- It was proposed that SACS be approached to appeal for an extension to the review because an academic year is entirely necessary to complete the compliance certification.
- Colleges will soon be able to select courses from the VCT schedule to create a local schedule. This will help colleges control which courses they are going to offer their students.

Conference Presentations

The committee suggested that VCT get on the TCCIA meeting agenda (Oct. 5-7). It is important for a panel discussion group to present at these conferences to discuss those major areas colleges that will be responsible for. Also, perhaps a presentation would be beneficial at the TACTE, TCCTA, and TACE conferences as well.

A STARLINK teleconference presentation was also proposed for September. This include a panel of Donnetta, John, Ann, Ron and moderated by Carolyn.

Ideas for Supporting Colleges through the Review Process

- Regional Meetings
- Listserve

Need for PR Campaign to Keep Colleges Onboard through SACS Review

The committee brainstormed reasons colleges should stay onboard with VCT.

- Viable alternative to small classes and institutions in lieu of extremely small classes.
- Opens the door to a much broader access.
- Speeds access. Saves on campus courses.
- Maximizes use of faculty.
- Eligible for VCT grant funds.

DLAC Continuity through SACS Review Process

Carolyn Robertson stated that the committee should be thinking about continuity during the SACS review. If for some reason Donnetta does not remain as chair, the committee might consider her to be an ex-officio member because she has been on all the official visits. It is important to have that continuity.

ONLINE ACCESS TO FACULTY CREDENTIALS

Bill Carter from Austin Community College explained Fortis, the document system that ACC has acquired. Ron and Bill proposed that faculty credentials be stored on this system. It would enable colleges to make credentials of VCT instructors accessible online in a highly secure system. Each college would assign a Credentials Administrator, who would be assigned a login username and password. Users will not be able to print transcripts. VCT's use of Fortis would cost about \$1000 per year, a cost that would be included in the VCT budget. The system is backed up nightly, and those backups are saved up to 30 days. Login would be limited to one person at every college. Credentials would be scanned and put on a disc and sent to the VCT office. Credentials Administrators need only have to review credentials for an instructor once. SACS committee will be given logins as needed for their reviews.

The committee agreed that Fortis is a viable solution, and no one objects to presenting this idea to the presidents. It was decided that, for now, one person per college should be appointed by the president to have access to faculty credentials online. The committee proposed the following deadlines for submitting summaries and credentials for the Fortis system.

Qualification Summaries: July 15th

Credentials:

August 15 (1st year 2005)

September 10 (Fall)

February 5 (Spring)

June 10 Sum I

July 20 Sum II/Fall

EVALUATION OF COURSES HOSTED THROUGH VCT

A DLAC subcommittee needs to work on a standardized evaluation. It is important to collect the appropriate data at the statewide level so the institutions can use it as comparative data for institutional effectiveness. A group of four members volunteered to serve on this committee. (John, Donnetta, Ron, and Lee.)

MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING

The current VCT MOU needs to be revised to reflect the changes brought on by the SACS review.

LEARN NETWORK

Bill Carter reported on the progress of the Learning Education and Resource Network project.

TACC PRESIDENT'S REPORT (Rey Garcia)

Rey thanked everyone for their kind and generous service. TACC is very committed to both STARLINK and VCT, and the work accomplished by the DLAC is a priority. Presidents continue to want VCT to evolve, and they want your recommendations on how to keep it growing, vibrant, and healthy. This SACS review is necessary. Presidents see value in what VCT does, and at some colleges, it is a significant component of their distance learning programs.

Rey remarked that we need to do a better job in educating legislators on what VCT is and who it serves. This past legislative session there were many new players that were not familiar with VCT and STARLINK. We need to inform them and let their legislators know it is an important

matter. Rey may have to travel and show them it is tangible. The same is true for STARLINK. Some colleges don't see VCT and STARLINK as being statewide services. They see STARLINK as being a Dallas thing and VCT an Austin thing. A one-page document that legislators can read quickly and easily would be helpful. The document should detail what VCT and STARLINK does and how many people it serves. Some ideas for the one-page document were:

- Explain how these courses would not have been available to students.
- Explain VCT's role in helping complete degrees on schedule as planned.
- Use the map with all the state connections to show the statewide influence.
- Include a student's story—some who was able to graduate or get a job because of the involvement with VCT.