

E.1.3 (Policy) Core Curriculum and Degrees

Responsible Department: Vice Chancellor for Academic Success

Adoption: 5-19-09

Last Board Action: 2-23-21

Degrees

The completion agenda of the Alamo Colleges District (St. Philip's College, San Antonio College, Palo Alto College, Northwest Vista College, and Northeast Lakeview College) is focused on preparing students for their next educational or career step. Degree students may pursue the state mandated core curriculum, a stackable certificate leading toward the two-year degree, with flexibility to both pursue their areas of academic interest and to maximize the number of credits transferable for degree credit. Technical skill students shall have stackable program options to help them successfully enter the workforce and continue to enhance their lifelong educational progress. The goal is alignment from the Texas public schools' endorsements to and through the Alamo Colleges District through a college/university baccalaureate degree to a career. Students may also complete a Bachelor of Science Degree in Nursing.

The Alamo Colleges District's completion agenda includes taking proactive measures to ensure that "every course counts," in order to reduce students' cost and time of attendance and the cost to local and state taxpayers, while providing students with additional flexibility and opportunities to earn a two-year degree while maximizing the number of credits transferred toward a baccalaureate degree. The Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB) and the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC) have specific guidelines and requirements for institutions awarding associates degrees which provide the foundation for our curricular maps. At the state level, the Texas Legislature through HB5 83(R), HB 2628 84(R), HB 298 84(R) and SB1189 84(R) has promoted clear academic pathways for transfer degrees. In addition, the THECB 60x30 TX 2015-2030 Higher Education Strategic Plan for Texas calls for pathways and marketable skills in all programs offered. At the local level, the SA-TEC (Talent for Economic Competitiveness) is intended to create a pipeline into the workforce and meet employer needs. The Alamo Colleges District needs to provide marketable skills for all programs. The majority of students need to work, and teaching marketable skills allows students to continue working in their field while pursuing degree completion.

The Associate of Arts (AA), Associate of Science (AS) and Associate of Arts in Teaching (AAT) degrees awarded by the colleges of the Alamo Colleges District are transfer-specific. Within these degree types, students may select a concentration which serves as a pre-major for their further study at a senior institution. Transfer Advising Guides provide courses aligned with the baccalaureate degree requirements at each of the area universities to ensure that students can complete the associate degree and have their courses transfer and count toward the baccalaureate degree at their selected transfer institution. The core curriculum (general education) requirement for these degrees is forty-two (42) hours and the remaining eighteen (18) hours are elective courses. As defined in the 60x30 TX 20152030 Texas Higher Education Strategic Plan, faculty

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will develop marketable skills for the core curriculum and collaborate with our transfer institutions to develop 2+2 marketable skills for the baccalaureate degree. Students may select elective courses to align with their desired transfer institution's Transfer Advising Guide to ensure full course transfer. Students who complete an Advising Guide containing at least 60 hours for a transfer institution with which the Alamo Colleges District has an articulation agreement may be awarded an associate degree. Students must consult with their advisor so that their educational and employment goals are productively and proactively addressed.

The pre-major designation provides students with the greatest flexibility to customize their course selections to meet both their academic interest areas and the specific requirements of their intended transfer institution. The colleges of the Alamo Colleges District should align with this nomenclature and structure to ensure a consistent experience for students. Program assessment, a requirement of SACSCOC, will occur at the college degree level.

The AAS degrees and certificates, intended for specific workforce skills attainment, have discipline-specific majors. The stackable certificates and AAS degree may require a preponderance of academic courses based on demand in the service area. In such cases, the development of the program(s) must meet the requirements described in the THECB Guidelines for Instructional Programs in Workforce Education, which allow a program to include a preponderance of academic courses as recommended by the program advisory committee with academic and workforce skills, knowledge, and abilities identified by industry partners.

The RN to BSN (Bachelor of Science degree in Nursing) program builds on nursing skills by providing research-based nursing science, principles of nursing leadership, and a liberal arts foundation. Students complete the BSN in one year, while working as a RN and earning a salary. The RN to BSN degree program prepares students for professional nursing practice across multiple healthcare settings and provides the knowledge, skills and credentials needed to take advantage of opportunities to move into higher level nursing roles. Upon completion of the Bachelor of Science Degree, students will be able to expand their role and become leaders in the healthcare systems. Graduates will be prepared to further their education to earn a master's degree in nursing to work as practitioners, administrators, educators, and clinical nurse specialists.

When an Advisory Committee validates that the two-year AA or AS degree provides the marketable skills needed by employers and at least one university will accept the program requirements toward a baccalaureate degree, the colleges of the Alamo Colleges District will, either in conjunction with state or national certification or through the establishment of a local certification with area employers, define area marketable skills enabling the colleges to award an official marketable skills certificate along with the AA/AS degree to facilitate employment, career entry, and completion of the baccalaureate degree as is currently provided for certificate/AAS graduates.

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The colleges of the Alamo Colleges confer AA, AS, and AAT degree awards for transfer rather than discipline-specific awards. SACSCOC has notified the Alamo Colleges that it is not appropriate to designate pre-majors, transfer concentrations or the equivalent on student diplomas and transcripts. Students earning a transfer degree under catalog requirements beginning with the 2016-2017 academic year will have Associate of Arts, Associate of Science, or Associate of Arts in Teaching degree posted on their publicly-released academic records. The Field-of-study curricula, a THECB approved sequence of courses that provide a state-wide guarantee of transfer to any public college or university in Texas and apply toward the relevant degree program, will be posted on the publicly-released academic record. The BSN will be posted on the publicly-released academic record. The colleges of the Alamo College District shall establish program-level learning outcomes that include alignment with the requirements for success in employment and further education in a given field and apply the results of learning outcomes assessment to improve the effectiveness of instruction across programs.

Graduate Guarantee Program

The Chancellor shall develop and promulgate procedures to implement institutional graduate guarantees for Associate of Applied Science Degrees and Certificates of Completion awarded by each of the colleges in the College District.

Honorary Associate Degrees

The Board may award an Honorary Associate Degree to an individual in recognition of:

1. Extraordinary achievements in the fields of public affairs, the sciences, humanities and the arts, scholarship, education, business, philanthropy, or social services which exemplify the mission and vision of the Alamo Colleges District;
2. Outstanding public service to the Alamo College District, the community, the state of Texas, or to humanity at large; or
3. Distinction through significant contributions to the economy or society at large.

Current employees, Trustees and other incumbent elected officials are not eligible for consideration for the Honorary Associates Degree.

The award may be initiated by the Board in consultation with the Chancellor and the respective college President, or nominees may be recommended through a college President to the Chancellor for review by an ad hoc committee of the Board. Nominations recommended by the ad hoc committee will be presented to the Board for consideration. The Board shall determine which nominees shall receive the Honorary Associates Degree.

Procedure [E.1.3.1](#) Honorary Associates Degree

Form [E.1.3.1.F](#) Nomination for Honorary Associates Degree

Legal Reference - TACC Policy Reference Manual

EFA(LEGAL) - Curriculum Design: Instructional Programs and Courses

EFAA(LEGAL) - Instructional Programs and Courses: Academic Courses

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EFAB(LEGAL) - Instructional Programs and Courses: Career Technical and Workforce Courses

EFB(LEGAL) - Curriculum Design: Degrees and Certificates

EGA(LEGAL) - Academic Achievement: Grading and Credit

EI(LEGAL) - Testing Programs