



*Southern Association of Colleges and Schools
Commission on Colleges*

PRELIMINARY REPORT OF THE REAFFIRMATION COMMITTEE

(Revised: January 2012
Edited: March 2013)

Statement Regarding the Report

The Board of Trustees of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC) is responsible for making the final determination on reaffirmation of accreditation based on the findings contained in this committee report, the institution's response to issues contained in the report, other assessments relevant to the review, and application of the Commission's policies and procedures. Final interpretation of the Principles of Accreditation and final action on the accreditation status of the institution rest with SACSCOC Board of Trustees..

Name of the Institution: Texas A & M University - Commerce

Date of the Review: November 7-8, 2013

COC Staff Member: Dr. Barry D. Goldstein

Chair of the Committee Dr. Timothy J. Crimmins
Director, Center for Neighborhood and
Metropolitan Studies
Georgia State University
Atlanta, GA

Part I. Overview and Introduction to the Institution

To be completed by the On-site Reaffirmation Committee.

Part II. Assessment of Compliance

Sections A thru E to be completed by the Off-Site Review Committee and the On-Site Reaffirmation Committee. An asterisk before the standard indicates that it will be reviewed by the On-Site Reaffirmation Committee even if the off-site review determines compliance.

A. Assessment of Compliance with Section 1: The Principle of Integrity

1.1 The institution operates with integrity in all matters. **(Integrity)** **Compliance**

The Off-Site Reaffirmation Committee found no evidence that Texas A&M University – Commerce (TAMU-C) operates without integrity.

B. Assessment of Compliance with Section 2: Core Requirements

2.1 The institution has degree-granting authority from the appropriate government agency or agencies. **(Degree-granting Authority)**

Compliance

Section 87.551 of the Texas Education Code establish the institution, then named East Texas State University, as a degree granting institution of higher education within the Texas A&M System. Section 87.552 authorizes the Board of Regents to award “baccalaureate, master’s, and doctoral degrees and their equivalents”.

2.2 The institution has a governing board of at least five members that is the legal body with specific authority over the institution. The board is an active policy-making body for the institution and is ultimately responsible for ensuring that the financial resources of the institution are adequate to provide a sound educational program. The board is not controlled by a minority of board members or by organizations or interests separate from it. Both the presiding officer of the board and a majority of other voting members of the board are free of any contractual, employment, or personal or familial financial interest in the institution.

A military institution authorized and operated by the federal government to award degrees has a public board on which both the presiding officer and a majority of

the other members are neither civilian employees of the military nor active/retired military. The board has broad and significant influence upon the institution's programs and operations, plays an active role in policy-making, and ensures that the financial resources of the institution are used to provide a sound educational program. The board is not controlled by a minority of board members or by organizations or interests separate from the board except as specified by the authorizing legislation. Both the presiding officer of the board and a majority of other voting board members are free of any contractual, employment, or personal or familial financial interest in the institution. **(Governing Board)**

Compliance

As part of the TAMU-C System, and as required by the Texas Education Code, Section 85, the University is governed by an independent Board of Regents consisting of nine voting independent members, plus a non-voting student representative.

The Board is structured around three staggered classes of three regents, appointed by the Governor and confirmed by the State Senate. Current members are prominent citizens with accomplished careers independent of the University and show no evidence of conflict of interest. State laws establish personal disclosure requirements, standards of conduct and conflict of interest stipulations that help to assure that there are no conflicts of interest in decisions of the Board. Requirements of a quorum and evidence from a representative sample of Regents meetings indicate that decisions are made by a majority of the Regents.

The Board of Regents has fiduciary responsibilities over TAMU-C, including financial matters. A standing Committee on Finance is charged with making recommendations to the Board concerning budgets, financing, treasury and efficiency. Minutes from the August 2012 meeting of the Regents indicate that a majority vote approved the 2013 annual budget.

- 2.3** The institution has a chief executive officer whose primary responsibility is to the institution and who is not the presiding officer of the board. *(See the Commission policy "Core Requirement 2.3: Documenting an Alternate Approach.")* **(Chief Executive Officer)**

Compliance

Following Texas A&M System Policy 02.05, TAMU-C's chief executive officer is its president. The President is appointed by the Board of Regents on the recommendation of the Chancellor of the Texas A&M System. The President may not serve as a Regent and does therefore not qualify to preside it.

Policy Statement 02.05 of the System assigns to the President duties that are typical of a university's chief executive officer, including the evaluation of administrative officers, planning and oversight of academic operations, elaboration of budgets, financial and human resource administration, etc.

- 2.4 The institution has a clearly defined, comprehensive, and published mission statement that is specific to the institution and appropriate for higher education. The mission addresses teaching and learning and, where applicable, research and public service. **(Institutional Mission)**

Compliance

The mission statement of TAMU-C addresses teaching and learning, research and public service. The mission statement is clearly defined, comprehensive, specific to the institution and appropriate for a regional university. It is published and disseminated widely to all relevant stakeholders. It is reflective of its distinctiveness and its commitment to its constituents.

- 2.5 The institution engages in ongoing, integrated, and institution-wide research-based planning and evaluation processes that (1) incorporate a systematic review of institutional mission, goals, and outcomes; (2) result in continuing improvement in institutional quality; and (3) demonstrate the institution is effectively accomplishing its mission. **(Institutional Effectiveness)**

Non-Compliance

The Off-Site Reaffirmation Committee found insufficient documentation in the institution's current 2011-2015 Strategic Plan to demonstrate that the institution is accomplishing its mission. While the strategic planning process appears to be integrated and university-wide, as evidenced by its impact on unit-level strategic plans (such as the enrollment management plan), there does not appear to be a systematic review of outcomes or planned accomplishments. Selected examples of continuous improvement were provided in areas such as student engagement and research portfolio growth, and NSSE and Texas State Higher Education Accountability reports; however, there is insufficient evidence that the process is systematic or institutionalized.

- 2.6 The institution is in operation and has students enrolled in degree programs. **(Continuous Operation)**

Compliance

TAMU-C has been in continuous operation since 1889. Enrollment data submitted by the University for fall 2008 through fall 2012 indicate increasing enrollments in both undergraduate and graduate programs in all four colleges.

- 2.7.1 The institution offers one or more degree programs based on at least 60 semester credit hours or the equivalent at the associate level; at least 120 semester credit hours or the equivalent at the baccalaureate level; or at least 30 semester credit hours or the equivalent at the post-baccalaureate, graduate, or professional level. If an institution uses a unit other than semester credit hours, it provides an explanation for the equivalency. The institution also provides a

justification for all degrees that include fewer than the required number of semester credit hours or its equivalent unit. **(Program Length)**

Compliance

The Texas Education Code 61 defines semester credit hour requirements for baccalaureate degrees in accord with SACSCOC minimum of 120 semester credit hours. With a few exceptions due to discipline-specific accreditation, all baccalaureate degrees are either at 120 semester credit hours or slightly above. These credit hour requirements are clearly stated in the *Undergraduate Catalog* and Website of the institution. The *Undergraduate Catalog* cites 13 different baccalaureate degree types, along with minimum for a major, minor, or emphasis.

The *Graduate Catalog* and Website of the institution clearly state the semester credit hours for all master's and doctoral degrees. All graduate degrees conform to minimum credit hour standards.

The Off-Site Reaffirmation Committee's review of the *Graduate Catalog* and graduate degree plans made available on the Web demonstrate that the institution offers no graduate degrees of less than 30 semester credit hours. The institution does offer several graduate certificate programs for purposes of professional development. The institution requires that these programs have a minimum of 12 semester credit hours and a maximum of 24 semester credit hours. Documents for *New Program and Curriculum Approval* and *Course Requirements for the Masters and Doctoral Degree* clearly outline the minimum number of semester credit hours for advanced degrees and indicate how program length is established and monitored at the institution.

- 2.7.2** The institution offers degree programs that embody a coherent course of study that is compatible with its stated mission and is based upon fields of study appropriate to higher education. **(Program Content)**

Compliance

The Off-Site Reaffirmation Committee's review of TAMU-C Mission Statement, the *Undergraduate Catalog*, and *Graduate Catalog* confirms that institution offers degree programs consistent with the its mission of teaching, research, and service to state, region and beyond. The documents reveal institutional governance and course/program development processes and approval procedures for ensuring the coherence and rigor of programs compatible with the mission and appropriate to higher education. Information about the general education program (University Core, general studies) and requirements for degrees in specific majors demonstrate coherence in sequencing of courses, increasing complexity for courses at higher levels than lower levels, and make clear the linkages between and among different program components. Furthermore, external evaluation by various accreditation bodies and/or state agencies for licensure and certification provide for additional review and quality assurance that the institution's programs are coherent and suitable for collegiate and advanced study.

***2.7.3** In each undergraduate degree program, the institution requires the successful completion of a general education component at the collegiate level that (1) is a substantial component of each undergraduate degree, (2) ensures breadth of knowledge, and (3) is based on a coherent rationale. For degree completion in associate programs, the component constitutes a minimum of 15 semester hours or the equivalent; for baccalaureate programs, a minimum of 30 semester hours or the equivalent. These credit hours are to be drawn from and include at least one course from each of the following areas: humanities/fine arts, social/behavioral sciences, and natural science/mathematics. The courses do not narrowly focus on those skills, techniques, and procedures specific to a particular occupation or profession. If an institution uses a unit other than semester credit hours, it provides an explanation for the equivalency. The institution also provides a justification if it allows for fewer than the required number of semester credit hours or its equivalent unit of general education courses. **(General Education)**

Compliance

TAMU-C requires all undergraduate students to satisfy a University Studies requirement of 43 hours. The program's breadth of knowledge and coherent rationale follows the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board's (THECB) "Core Curriculum: Assumptions and Defining Characteristics." The University's rationale for general education is expanded in the *Catalog*. The University Studies program at TAMU-C is "designed to 1) stress breadth and provide a person with opportunities to perceive the integration of knowledge, 2) involve the study of liberal arts and science, 3) encourage understanding of our heritage as well as respect for other people's cultures, 4) develop a mastery of linguistic, analytical, and computational skills that are necessary for lifelong learning, and 5) foster development of personal qualities as appropriate acceptance of ambiguity, empathy, and acceptance of others, and expanded understanding of self." TAMU-C's general education component meets or exceeds the requirement of at least one course from each of the following areas: humanities/fine arts, social/behavioral sciences, and natural science/mathematics.

The Off-Site Reaffirmation Committee's review of the *Core Curriculum Revision and Assessment Plan* and the Deans Council Minutes document faculty and administrative processes that govern the general education course consideration and approval processes, and the assessment plan for University Studies courses.

2.7.4 The institution provides instruction for all course work required for at least one degree program at each level at which it awards degrees. If the institution does not provide instruction for all such course work and (1) makes arrangements for some instruction to be provided by other accredited institutions or entities through contracts or consortia or (2) uses some other alternative approach to meeting this requirement, the alternative approach must be approved by the Commission on Colleges. In both cases, the institution demonstrates that it controls all aspects of its educational program. (See the Commission policy "Core

Requirement 2.7.4: Documenting an Alternate Approach.” **(Course work for Degrees)**

Compliance

TAMU-C submitted as evidence for this standard the *Undergraduate Catalog* and *Graduate Catalog*, and the Webpage for the electronic advisement/degree audit tool, “Degree works.” These documents and the software tool are consistent with one another in providing the plan of study for each degree offered at the University. In addition, these publications substantiate that the University controls its academic programs at each level of degree awarded - baccalaureate, masters and doctorate. The University provided examples from three disciplines representing each level of degrees awarded. The University indicated that it is not utilizing any of the alternative approaches to meet the requirement of CR 2.7.4.

- *2.8** The number of full-time faculty members is adequate to support the mission of the institution and to ensure the quality and integrity of each of its academic programs. **(Faculty)**

Compliance

Statistical data presented as evidence demonstrates that the institution has full-time faculty who teach the majority of courses (range 51.6-52.2%) and the vast majority of undergraduate credit hour production (range 68.1-70.4%). The same is true concerning graduate instruction. Policies exist concerning instructional workload for full-time faculty.

The work of the Budget Review and Development Council along with the Dean’s Council and Faculty Senate resulted in a new policy on Faculty Workload to help better allocate funds across the University for special projects supporting new faculty and address the problem of “heavy reliance on adjunct faculty and underrepresentation of full-time faculty in some programs.”

- 2.9** The institution, through ownership or formal arrangements or agreements, provides and supports student and faculty access and user privileges to adequate library collections and services and to other learning/information resources consistent with the degrees offered. Collections, resources, and services are sufficient to support all its educational, research, and public service programs. **(Learning Resources and Services)**

Compliance

According to the documentation submitted, TAMU-C is focused on providing its faculty and students access to adequate library collections and services wherever they are studying, whether at the Commerce or Mesquite campuses or as distance education students. The library has used the LibQual survey instrument in both 2005 and in 2012 to solicit meaningful feedback from its users and it has been very proactive in responding to user needs and requests.

The facilities are of an appropriate size and improvements have been made recently to provide the university community with the types of spaces that they have requested, and which are in line with academic library user preferences throughout the nation. The library has added more group study spaces, quiet study zones, collaborative study and casual social areas and expanded computing offerings. The libraries have also been responsive to user requests by improving services - greatly expanding library open hours, providing computer and equipment circulation, a multi-media center and additional outreach programming.

While, in general, the university community is satisfied with the libraries' collections, facilities and services, the LibQual survey indicated a slight gap between actual and desired access to necessary collections particularly at the graduate and faculty levels. The library has applied systematic strategies to analyze and rectify this issue. It has utilized standard assessment tools and usage statistics to review and identify where the collections are lacking with regard to the needs of TAMU-C's academic programs and research fields. Consequently the library has initiated an ongoing weeding program of outdated material and a plan to bring collections up to date where necessary using an approval plan. Collection building will focus on ebooks to better serve the growing number of distance education students. Additionally, TAMU-C leverages consortia purchasing and reciprocal borrowing to expand collections to meet the needs of users. Furthermore it has implemented a discovery service platform to improve the ease of access to its collections.

- *2.10** The institution provides student support programs, services, and activities consistent with its mission that are intended to promote student learning and enhance the development of its students. **(Student Support Services)**

Compliance

The institution provides a comprehensive and appropriate range of student and academic support services for the various demographics represented in its student population – traditional, nontraditional, off-campus, online, student athletes, graduate students, etc. The support services appear to effectively promote the University's mission of providing "a personal educational experience for a diverse community of life-long learners." Through online and printed publications, students are made aware of the availability of services. Among the tools utilized to collect data and to assess the effectiveness of support services provided are The National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) and The Graduating Student Surveys (GSS). The report explained the survey results and how the data were used to make changes in support service delivery methods. A Division of Student Access and Success was created in response to 2009 survey data (GSS and NSSE), providing a one stop resource to address customer service and academic advising concerns. The Division includes support programs that serve all students and also focuses on target populations, per the institutional mission, to provide personal educational experience for a diverse community. Examples reflecting the needs of those specific growing student populations include the creation of the Office for Military Veterans in 2010,

International Student Services, Graduate Student Services, and Hispanic Outreach and Student Programs. Distance learner's needs are also being addressed through SoftChalk software, added in fall 2013.

- 2.11.1** The institution has a sound financial base and demonstrated financial stability to support the mission of the institution and the scope of its programs and services.

The member institution provides the following financial statements: (1) an institutional audit (or *Standard Review Report* issued in accordance with *Statements on Standards for Accounting and Review Services* issued by the AICPA for those institutions audited as part of a systemwide or statewide audit) and written institutional management letter for the most recent fiscal year prepared by an independent certified public accountant and/or an appropriate governmental auditing agency employing the appropriate audit (or *Standard Review Report*) guide; (2) a statement of financial position of unrestricted net assets, exclusive of plant assets and plant-related debt, which represents the change in unrestricted net assets attributable to operations for the most recent year; and (3) an annual budget that is preceded by sound planning, is subject to sound fiscal procedures, and is approved by the governing board. **(Financial Resources)**

Non-Compliance

Required documentation of Standard Review Report for the most recently completed Fiscal Year 2013 (FY13) end prior to the date of the submission of the Compliance Certification will not be completed until spring, 2014 (estimated as late as January or early February). This report should be accompanied by a management letter specific to TAMU-C.

The University is not required to have annual detailed audits. As an agency of Texas, TAMU-C is included within the Texas A&M University System, which is presented as a separate column within major Enterprise Funds alongside the other Texas state college and university systems within the Texas statewide audited financial statements. The Texas State Auditor's Office provides audit services. However, Texas State Audit contracts with KPMG (who offers a separate opinion) to perform portions of the federal audit procedures necessary to meet the requirements of the federal Single Audit Act and OMB Circular A-133. All Texas statewide audit reports for fiscal years 2010 through 2012 have unqualified opinions.

The University exhibits a sound financial base, financial stability, expenditure control and appropriate financial behavior. Key indicators include consistent enrollment increases for each year for the 4 most recent years - 3%, 13%, 4%, 4% respectively - with a 27% increase overall since 2008. This has provided a steady revenue stream with clear indications this will continue. Total revenues are up 16% since 2010; while total expenditures remain at 2010 levels. The increase in the change in net income from 2010 to 2012 is dramatic - \$3.8M to \$24.4M. Total net assets increased 26% from 2010 to 2012. There have been no deficits. The President has communicated that state funding reductions are likely to continue. Texas has implemented outcomes based funding for 10% of

its state funding. State support is down approximately 8% since 2010. However, tuition and fee revenue are up approximately 64% with increased enrollment and fees that more than compensate for the decline in state funding.

The University's budget is administered annually in a well-defined and engaging process involving a cross-functional budget review and development council that includes students, faculty and staff. TAMU-C's Board approved the FY13 operating budget as documented in their minutes. TAMU-C's President links budget to the University strategic planning through annual communications. State appropriations are provided biennially.

2.11.2 The institution has adequate physical resources to support the mission of the institution and the scope of its programs and services. **(Physical Resources)**

Compliance

The University operates and maintains the physical facilities, both on and off campus, in collaboration with Service Solutions Corporation (SSC). For off-site facilities, the University uses leasing agreements specific to each branch that identify the scope of work and services to be provided.

The Vice President for Business and Administration establishes maintenance and minor construction priorities. Preventive maintenance is scheduled on a recurring basis and is managed via a computerized maintenance management system, as is routine maintenance and repairs. Professional and technical support is available for managing construction projects, including on-site inspection of work. Emergencies are handled immediately with dispatch by hand-held radio communication. Routine, non-emergency requests are normally handled within 30 days.

The Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB) maintains overall performance standards relating to classroom and laboratory usage. It collects data annually concerning space use efficiency of public universities in Texas. Fall 2012 University scores related to facility demand, utilization rates, and percent fill, were below THECB standards and, therefore, indicate that TAMU-C appears capable of handling the growth in enrollment as indicated by current years' trends.

TAMU-C recently initiated a campus master planning process intended to lead the University through 2032. The scope of the master plan was determined by cooperative efforts made by the TAMU-C community, and was developed based on TAMU-C's Strategic Plan. The Master Plan Committee included faculty, staff, and students who included input from the campus and the community. The Plan has been presented to students, faculty, staff, and the Commerce City Council and is posted on the President's Website. The plan included appropriate assumptions such as enrollment trends, academic program plans, and student demographic. It considered existing and potential future facility needs for TAMU-C's key functions and activities in line with the strategic plan.

Quarterly customer surveys confirm that services provided by all trades and work areas are meeting expectations. Survey results are shared with shop supervisors and all personnel to facilitate service improvement. For off-site facilities, TAMU-C conducts student surveys. Students consider the buildings safe, with good to average parking, and above average maintenance of computer labs.

THECB establishes building condition codes that are updated as deferred maintenance is identified and completed. None of TAMU-C's facilities are currently coded as requiring major physical updating and/or modernization. No facilities at TAMU-C have ever been identified for demolition or termination due to physical conditions.

- 2.12** The institution has developed an acceptable Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP) that includes an institutional process for identifying key issues emerging from institutional assessment and focuses on learning outcomes and/or the environment supporting student learning and accomplishing the mission of the institution. **(Quality Enhancement Plan)**

Not Applicable

Preliminary Financials

C. Assessment of Compliance with Section 3: Comprehensive Standards

- 3.1.1** The mission statement is current and comprehensive, accurately guides the institution's operations, is periodically reviewed and updated, is approved by the governing board, and is communicated to the institution's constituencies. **(Mission).**

Compliance

The institution's mission statement is current and comprehensively addresses, as required by the Section 61.0511 of the Texas Education Code, the three missions of higher education: teaching, research, and public service. Schedules for periodic review and the approval process are delineated, and examples of documents through which the mission statement is communicated are provided.

- 3.2.1** The governing board of the institution is responsible for the selection and the periodic evaluation of the chief executive officer. **(CEO evaluation/selection)**

Compliance

Section 51.352.d.3 of the Texas Education Code specifically assigns to the Board of Regents the power and responsibility to "appoint the president [...] and evaluate the chief executive officer of each component institution." Given the University's status as a component of a System led by a Chancellor, the Code also establishes that the Board "shall receive recommendations from the chancellor" in fulfilling the above mentioned responsibilities.

During the last presidential transition, in 2007-2008, a search committee was formed including two Regents, faculty, staff, student and members of the community. The Committee made a recommendation to the Chancellor who in turn made a recommendation to the Board of Regents for the final decision, as recorded in the April 23, 2008 Board minutes.

System Policy 02.01 requires the Board to perform an annual evaluation of the President. This evaluation is delegated to the Chancellor. The CEO Performance Assessment forms for 2010 and 2013 are structured around a number of relevant performance criteria and include qualitative comments and suggestions for improvement by the Chancellor. There's evidence that the Board is providing some oversight of the presidential evaluation process by the Chancellor in executive session.

- 3.2.2** The legal authority and operating control of the institution are clearly defined for the following areas within the institution's governance structure: **(Governing board control)**

- 3.2.2.1** the institution's mission
Compliance

According to state law, approval for TAMU-C mission statement corresponds to the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board in consultation with the Board of Regents. The law further requires that the Coordinating Board review the mission statement periodically, which in practice occurs every four years. Documents provided show that the current Mission Statement was approved by the Board of Regents on May 26, 2006, and confirmed by the Coordinating Board on July 30, 2010.

3.2.2.2 the fiscal stability of the institution

Compliance

Responsibility for the financial viability of TAMU-C resides with the Board of Regents. The responsibility is discharged through a standing Finance Committee, the Chancellor of the System, and the President. Deviations of \$300,000 or more over budget require approval by the Chancellor and confirmation by the Board. The state auditor is charged by Statute with auditing the accounts and issuing an opinion as to whether the TAMU-C's financial statements present the true financial situation of the University.

3.2.2.3 institutional policy

Compliance

The Board establishes policies, the Chancellor establishes regulations for the System institutions, and the President establishes rules and procedures for each institution. A dedicated Compliance Website offers detailed information on each. <http://tamuc.edu/aboutUs/administrativeOffices/businessAdministration/departmentsOffices/compliance/default.aspx>

3.2.3 The governing board has a policy addressing conflict of interest for its members. **(Board conflict of interest)**

Compliance

In addition to state law, University System Policy 07.03 provides an adequate conflict of interest requirement and disclosure process. All Board members are required by law to file an annual statement of financial interest. Board minutes reflect cases when board members have recused themselves from voting on an issue that could be considered a conflict of interest (for example, a real estate lease approved by the board on 8/1/2008).

3.2.4 The governing board is free from undue influence from political, religious, or other external bodies and protects the institution from such influence. **(External influence)**

Compliance

Chapter 85 Subchapter B Section 85.11 and Chapter 51 Section 51.355 (b) of the Texas Education Code establishes the composition of the Board of Regents. The staggered nature of the Board, the six-year terms, and the requirement for Senate approval of gubernatorial appointments offers robust guarantees of independence in decisions by the Board. In addition, the Texas Public Information Act ensures a great deal of transparency about the Board's business.

- 3.2.5 The governing board has a policy whereby members can be dismissed only for appropriate reasons and by a fair process. **(Board dismissal)**

Non-Compliance

State law creates two mechanisms for dismissal of Board members: impeachment by the House and confirmed by the Senate, or removal by the appointing governor, with the consent of two thirds of the Senate. These mechanisms establish a fair process. However, no evidence is provided as to the reasons that may justify an impeachment.

- 3.2.6 There is a clear and appropriate distinction, in writing and practice, between the policy-making functions of the governing board and the responsibility of the administration and faculty to administer and implement policy. **(Board/administration distinction)**

Compliance

State law, System policies, TAMU-C procedures and presidential job description indicate an adequate delineation between the Board's policy setting role and the President's administrative responsibility.

- 3.2.7 The institution has a clearly defined and published organizational structure that delineates responsibility for the administration of policies. **(Organizational structure)**

Compliance

The organizational structure is clear and coherent and is readily available on TAMU-C's Website. Multiple charts describe the division of responsibilities and reporting lines

- *3.2.8 The institution has qualified administrative and academic officers with the experience and competence to lead the institution. **(Qualified administrative/academic officers)**

Compliance

The four officers reporting directly to the President and the other ancillary officers comprising the leadership team have relevant experience for their roles, most with significant tenures. The academic officers have appropriate credentials with relevant terminal degrees, as indicated by vitae and resumes provided.

- 3.2.9** The institution publishes policies regarding appointment, employment, and evaluation of all personnel. **(Personnel appointment)**

Compliance

Employment appointments and evaluation procedures at TAMU-C are guided by policies and regulations of the Texas A&M University System. TAMU-C has provided evidence that it publishes on its Human Resources Website the rules and procedures governing various categories of employees. The *Faculty Handbook* sets out the rules governing faculty employment. Although there is no evidence of a staff handbook, System regulations cover employment practices for staff. All employees are evaluated annually utilizing a process of rating the current goals that have been established and establishing new ones for the upcoming year. TAMU-C emails supervisors concerning the assessment process which is then forwarded to each employee. A compliance review of rules and policy takes place every two years on the System level. TAMU-C reviews its rules and procedures in concert with the governing body. At the University level, the President's Advisory Council is responsible for reviewing and proposing rules concerning personnel matters. New rules from each level of review are disseminated across the University.

- 3.2.10** The institution periodically evaluates the effectiveness of its administrators. **(Administrative staff evaluations)**

Compliance

All deans, vice-presidents and other senior administrators are evaluated annually in compliance with System Policy 2.05, Section 2.4. Academic deans and academic administrators are evaluated using a set of common standards found in procedure 12.01.99.R0.04. The institution uses a standardized performance and developmental evaluation form for all non-faculty in compliance with System policy 33.99.03. The evidence provided included redacted evaluations demonstrating thoughtful and individualized responses.

- 3.2.11** The institution's chief executive officer has ultimate responsibility for, and exercises appropriate administrative and fiscal control over, the institution's intercollegiate athletics program. **(Control of intercollegiate athletics)**

Compliance

The Athletic Director reports directly to the President, who retains administrative and fiscal control over athletics. The Athletic Director's job description clearly

states that he or she informs the President of progress and problems and submits recommendations for key fiscal and programmatic decisions. An independent audit dated August 31, 2009 demonstrates clearly that the President exercises his oversight over athletics.

- 3.2.12** The institution demonstrates that its chief executive officer controls the institution's fund-raising activities. **(Fund-raising activities).**

Compliance

The development function is under the President's direct oversight. The Vice President for Institutional Advancement signs all correspondence to donors. The President's travel schedules and Board minutes demonstrate that the President is actively engaged in fundraising and overseeing fundraising.

- 3.2.13** For any entity organized separately from the institution and formed primarily for the purpose of supporting the institution or its programs: (1) the legal authority and operating control of the institution is clearly defined with respect to that entity; (2) the relationship of that entity to the institution and the extent of any liability arising out of that relationship is clearly described in a formal, written manner; and (3) the institution demonstrates that (a) the chief executive officer controls any fund-raising activities of that entity or (b) the fund-raising activities of that entity are defined in a formal, written manner which assures that those activities further the mission of the institution. **(Institution-related entities)**

Compliance

Texas A&M University System Policy 60.01 and A&M System Regulation 60.01.01 provide authority and guidance to the University regarding affiliated organization relationships. The University has two external affiliated entities each of which are separate 501(c)(3) non-profit organizations: The Texas A&M University-Commerce Foundation and The Texas A&M University-Commerce Alumni Association.

The Vice President for Institutional Advancement reports to TAMU-C President (chief executive officer) and is responsible for the functions related to these entities (Advancement and Alumni Relations). The President establishes and evaluates annual goals for fund-raising activities in cooperation with the College Deans and the Athletic Director to identify fund-raising priorities.

The Foundation was organized as a private support organization to accept gifts for the benefit of TAMU-C and to oversee the stewardship of these gifts. Its relationship with the University is governed by a formal shared services affiliation agreement that defines legal authority and operating responsibility. This agreement details the commitments of both the Foundation and the University, including those to each other. Other essential elements of the affiliation agreement include: fiscal responsibility, Foundation operations, University employees, trademarks, audits and reports, receipt of funds, disbursement of funds, scholarship administration, ex-officio representation on Foundation Board,

governance, mutual commitments and duration of agreement. The mission of the Foundation is to promote the University with philanthropic support to enhance TAMU-C programs, deserving students, faculty and staff in meeting the education needs of the University. The Foundation Board includes TAMU-C leadership as ex officio, non-voting members for the purpose of providing advice and coordination for the mutual interest of the University and the Foundation Board as stated in the affiliation agreement. Ex officio members participate in agenda development for Foundation Board meetings and Foundation Executive Committee meetings and actively participate in meetings.

The Alumni Association was established, as stated in its bylaws, to assist the Office of Advancement in alumni resource development and gifts to enhance the University. The Association's relationship with the University is governed by a formal affiliation agreement, which includes a definition of legal authority and operating responsibility. This agreement details the commitments of both the Association and the University, including those to each other. Other essential elements of the affiliation agreement are similar to those of the Foundation mentioned above. The Association Board includes University leadership as ex officio to provide advice and coordination for the mutual interest of the University and the Association.

- 3.2.14** The institution's policies are clear concerning ownership of materials, compensation, copyright issues, and the use of revenue derived from the creation and production of all intellectual property. These policies apply to students, faculty, and staff. **(Intellectual property rights)**

Non-Compliance

TAMU-Commerce is reliant on the Texas A&M System's Office of Technology Commercialization (OTC) for administering the Intellectual Property Policy. The University refers its constituents to the System Website for the complete policy. The policy also appears on the University's Office of Research and Sponsored Programs website. The OTC sponsors various training opportunities in this area for member schools. To supplement System offerings, TAMU-C is in the process of establishing an Intellectual Advisory Committee through its Office of Research and Sponsored Programs. The University should utilize the OTC policy as a frame for developing its campus-specific Intellectual Property Policy.

- 3.3.1** The institution identifies expected outcomes, assesses the extent to which it achieves these outcomes, and provides evidence of improvement based on analysis of the results in each of the following areas **(Institutional Effectiveness)**:

- *3.3.1.1** educational programs, to include student learning outcomes

Non-Compliance

Many units lack evidence of any form of assessment, and several units establish outcomes which do not relate to student learning but instead to student placement, following the degree plan and other such non-learning measures. Only a few academic units report utilizing direct measures to gauge learning and action plans are rarely presented in the WEAVE DARs. There is some evidence provided by the institution that shows that results from assessment were used in 2010, 2011 to develop some general plans for program improvement in Political Science, General Business, Political Science and Early Childhood Generalist program yet the institution should include all degree programs in their assurance of learning process, wherever or however delivered. The institution straight-forwardly acknowledges its challenges and plans for remediation using an institutionally-developed system, and its plan for developing stakeholders to understand the assessment process. However, the institution does not provide evidence that it identifies expected outcomes, assesses the extent to which it achieves these outcomes, and evidence of improvement based on analysis of the results in its educational programs.

3.3.1.2 administrative support services

Non-Compliance

The institution straight-forwardly acknowledges its challenges and plans for remediation using an institutionally-developed system, and its plan for developing stakeholders to understand the assessment process. However, the institution does not provide evidence that it identifies expected outcomes, assesses the extent to which it achieves these outcomes, and provide evidence of improvement based on analysis of the results in its administrative support services.

3.3.1.3 academic and student support services

Non-Compliance

The institution straight-forwardly acknowledges its challenges and plans for remediation using an institutionally-developed system, and its plan for developing stakeholders to understand the assessment process. However, the institution does not provide evidence that it identifies expected outcomes, assesses the extent to which it achieves these outcomes, and provide evidence of improvement based on analysis of the results in its academic and student support services.

3.3.1.4 research within its mission, if appropriate

Non-Compliance

The Office of Research's stated goals are

- to aid faculty, staff and students in aggressively pursuing sponsored extramural funding for research, scholarly and creative activities from a variety of sources, including public and private grants and contracts, philanthropy, congressionally-directed appropriations and the commercialization of discoveries;
- to enhance research compliance;
- to enhance recognition of outstanding sponsored research, scholarship and creative activities across all disciplines of the university;
- and to enhance global and international research and other sponsored activity awareness and collaborations.

While these objectives are fitting with the University's mission, the institution straight-forwardly acknowledges its challenges and plans for remediation using an institutionally-developed system, and its plan for developing stakeholders to understand the assessment process.

The Office of Research and Sponsored Programs presents on its Webpage (a) a mission statement that is aligned with the University mission, (b) a list of defined areas of research and research funding agencies, and (c) policies and procedures governing the University's research enterprise. The report narrative addressing this standard identifies (a) the "weaknesses" in the unit's assessment methodology, (b) the problems with the manner in which the outcomes are written, and (c) the units' inability to make changes in its operations based on assessment results. However, the institution does not provide evidence that it identifies expected outcomes, assesses the extent to which it achieves these outcomes, and provide evidence of improvement based on analysis of the results for research within its mission.

Notably, while there has been some ongoing evaluation in the research enterprise for at least five years, the process does meet the requirements of the standard. There is also no evidence of assessment in any research centers, studios or laboratories that may exist.

3.3.1.5 community/public service within its mission, if appropriate

Non-Compliance

The Off-Site Reaffirmation Committee found that expected outcomes for community/public service activities are not clearly defined with solid measurements or assessment linked to a strategic plan for community/public service in relation to the institutional mission to serve the region. The institution indicates that this effort is not centrally

organized within the institution. While the activities identified are appropriate to the mission, there is a sense that it is just a compilation of service activities/traditions among units, rather than a situation where the institution has identified that it will promote community or public service through its units that 1) enhances public interest and awareness of regional issues (KETR Public Radio) 2) promotes increased knowledge about STEM, and 3) enhances student access and success.

Community/public initiatives are evident at TAMU-C, with several pockets of service-related activities being conducted by University entities, faculty, staff and students with varying degrees of organization and accomplishment. While TAMU-C appears to be a good community and public servant to the region and beyond, institutional effectiveness documentation is lacking and does not contain the essential information necessary to demonstrate compliance.

- 3.3.2** The institution has developed a Quality Enhancement Plan that (1) demonstrates institutional capability for the initiation, implementation, and completion of the QEP; (2) includes broad-based involvement of institutional constituencies in the development and proposed implementation of the QEP; and (3) identifies goals and a plan to assess their achievement. **(Quality Enhancement Plan)**

Not Applicable

- 3.4.1** The institution demonstrates that each educational program for which academic credit is awarded is approved by the faculty and the administration. **(Academic program approval)**

Compliance

The institution has a policy (03.02.99.R0.01, "New Program and Curricular Approval Process,") that clearly states the faculty and administration responsibilities with regard to the development, implementation, and monitoring of academic programs. Documentation exists demonstrating the flow of approval and the existence of appropriate curriculum committees

Programs for which academic credit is awarded at TAMU-C are approved by the faculty and administration. New program proposals are initiated within the academic department. The process is described in the document *University Procedures*. This procedure supplements the Texas A&M System policy and the A&M System regulations. The Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board is the final level of approval. In addition, the TAMU-C reports any substantive changes, especially in the method of program delivery, to the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC). The procedures for program approval were updated in 2012 to include faculty involvement on the departmental, college and university levels. To illustrate the process, select degree programs were provided as evidence. The University implemented software to streamline the process in fall 2013.

- 3.4.2** The institution's continuing education, outreach, and service programs are consistent with the institution's mission. **(Continuing education/service programs)**

Compliance

The Off-Site Reaffirmation Committee's review of the Mission Statement and publications describing outreach activities such as the Murphy Day Web Page, the 2013 Distinguished Alumni Symposium, the Small Business Entrepreneur Conference, and the KETR MBR Radio Station Webpage demonstrate that institution's noncredit activities are consistent with the institution's mission. Outreach activities support capacity building in leadership for local schools, school districts, small businesses and industry; serve the community (such as the 2nd Annual Integrated Approach to Sexual Assault and Domestic Violence Conference); and develop and nurture talent (such as the Lion's Pride BEST Robotics Competition and the Future Farmers of American (FFA) Area V and VI Career Development Event).

- *3.4.3** The institution publishes admissions policies that are consistent with its mission. **(Admissions policies)**

Compliance

Admission standards and policies are guided by and comply with Texas Education Code Section §51.803 and University System Policy 11.04. Catalogs and websites provide clear and consistent descriptions, and unique requirements for graduate and specialty programs are clearly delineated. Among the documented evidence supporting this standard are System policies, procedures, and approval processes to which the University adheres. The report also explains the alignment of the admission policies and standards with the TAMU-C mission. The report narrative and supporting documents present the methods utilized by academic departments that have specific admission criteria.

- 3.4.4** The institution publishes policies that include criteria for evaluating, awarding, and accepting credit for transfer, experiential learning, credit by examination, advanced placement, and professional certificates that is consistent with its mission and ensures that course work and learning outcomes are at the collegiate level and comparable to the institution's own degree programs. The institution assumes responsibility for the academic quality of any course work or credit recorded on the institution's transcript. *(See Commission policy "Agreements Involving Joint and Dual Academic Awards: Policy and Procedures.")* **(Acceptance of academic credit)**

Compliance

TAMU-C has defined and published policies for evaluating, awarding and accepting credit and ensuring that all course work is at the collegiate level and comparable to the institution's own degree plan. TAMU-C ensures that transfer

credit is aligned with content taught at the University and is comparable to the University's course credit by using multiple cross-checks where several reviewing participants (Office of Undergraduate Admissions, faculty and academic advisors) determine if credit is acceptable.

The Off-Site Reaffirmation Committee found that TAMU-C employs clearly defined and published rules and policies for evaluating, awarding and accepting credit for coursework. The University ensures that the course work and learning outcomes are at the collegiate level and are comparable to its degree programs as well as consistent with the University's mission.

- 3.4.5** The institution publishes academic policies that adhere to principles of good educational practice. These policies are disseminated to students, faculty, and other interested parties through publications that accurately represent the programs and services of the institution. **(Academic policies)**

Compliance

The institution publishes a variety of documents, including catalogs and handbooks for both faculty and students that clearly state the policies of the University. In addition, the same information is provided on the Website, which links institutional policy to those of the System and the State.

The various policy documents are those that are important and standard at higher education institutions, including critical policies related to student conduct, faculty promotion and tenure, and curriculum. A clear policy also exists (01.01.01.R0.02) concerning the routing of the approval process and authority for policies. Minutes of Faculty Senate and Dean's Council meetings are offered as evidence of the approval process with appropriate decision-makers.

- 3.4.6** The institution employs sound and acceptable practices for determining the amount and level of credit awarded for courses, regardless of format or mode of delivery. **(Practices for awarding credit)**

Compliance

TAMU-C relies on a standard system to determine the amount of credit awarded for undergraduate and graduate courses (regardless of format or delivery mode) based on the unit of the semester credit hour, in accordance with Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB) rules. This includes both 'normal' semester-long courses as well as 'short' courses. The institution provides evidence for curricular routing and approvals by appropriate decision makers.

- 3.4.7** The institution ensures the quality of educational programs and courses offered through consortia relationships or contractual agreements, ensures ongoing compliance with the *Principles* and periodically evaluates the consortial relationship and/or agreement against the mission of the institution. (*See the*

Commission policy “Agreements Involving Joint and Dual Academic Awards: Policy and Procedures.”) **(Consortia relationships/contractual agreements)**

Compliance

Policy statements from the Texas A&M System and the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC) govern the TAMU-C process for entering into consortia/contractual agreement with other academic institutions. Agreements are guided by TAMU-C procedure 11.99.99.R0.05 *Articulation Agreements and Memorandums of Understanding* and by Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC) policy. The University Registrar confirmed via email that no collaborative degrees are offered at TAMU-C. TAMU-C maintains consortial relationships with other educational entities in order to provide students access to for-credit courses or programs they need most. According to TAMU-C procedure, agreements must go through an approval process before they are signed. Current academic agreements are documented on a spreadsheet in the Office of Academic Affairs, and expiration or review for renewal dates are tracked. The institution has carefully evaluated all of its signed agreements to ascertain that none speak to an arrangement whereby courses are automatically accepted from an institution without any criteria for acceptance. The University maintains records on faculty who teach courses as a part of consortia programming and ensures that they are appropriately credentialed.

- 3.4.8** The institution awards academic credit for course work taken on a noncredit basis only when there is documentation that the noncredit course work is equivalent to a designated credit experience. **(Noncredit to credit)**

Compliance

TAMU-C does not award credit for course work taken on a noncredit basis, except with the possibility of three different categories: 1) when courses have been taken as part of in-service training for governmental agencies or private businesses; 2) when courses have been taken as part of military service and 3) when courses have been taken at regionally accredited technical educational programs. Guidelines for non-traditional educational credits are provided in University Procedure 11.04.99.R0.09 *Undergraduate Non-Traditional Education* and described for students in the *Undergraduate Catalog* section titled “Undergraduate Non/Traditional Education.” A student requesting consideration of non-credit course work must submit all required documentation and make application to the Office of Undergraduate Admissions, and this office works with the appropriate academic department to evaluate the submission. The Office of Undergraduate Admissions will evaluate the American Council on Education (ACE) transcript and accept the ACE recommendation. Those courses accepted for baccalaureate credit will be posted as general electives. Courses not recommended for credit will not be posted.

- 3.4.9** The institution provides appropriate academic support services. **(Academic support services)**

Non-Compliance

Success Coaches provide a consistent point of contact for academic advising and general transitional support until the student has successfully met certain criteria, at which point advising and progression support shifts to advisors within the declared major. In addition to general services available to all students, population-specific assistance is also available for athletes, TRIO, disability, ESL, and Hispanic students. With the exception of disability resources for faculty, there was no other evidence provided to demonstrate other academic support programs for faculty.

- 3.4.10** The institution places primary responsibility for the content, quality, and effectiveness of its curriculum with its faculty. **(Responsibility for curriculum)**

Compliance

Accountability for curriculum approval and review processes at TAMU–C rests with the faculty. University Policy (03.02.99.RO.01) makes it clear that faculty is central to the development, implementation, monitoring, and alteration of curriculum at the institution. The process for approving curriculum content and the composition of the committees responsible for reviewing curriculum changes are the following: (a) University Program and Curriculum Approval Process, (b) University Studies and the Core Curriculum Program, (c) Constitution of the Faculty Senate, and (d) Graduate Council Procedures. Summarily, the curriculum receives proper analysis and approval at various levels, including departmental, Faculty Senate, and Graduate Council when appropriate. In the documents presented, the University provides details related to two degree programs to demonstrate the effectiveness of the annual review process conducted by faculty in each academic unit. The University has taken an additional step to undergird the annual review process. The President's Advisory Council proposed and passed a measure to appoint an Institutional Effectiveness Leadership Team which is composed of faculty from each college to assure the quality of degree programs.

- *3.4.11** For each major in a degree program, the institution assigns responsibility for program coordination, as well as for curriculum development and review, to persons academically qualified in the field. In those degree programs for which the institution does not identify a major, this requirement applies to a curricular area or concentration. **(Academic program coordination)**

Compliance

The institution has clear policy placing Department Heads as individuals with focused responsibility for coordination of academic programs (01.03.99.RO.04). Those departments with multiple programs delegate specific program responsibility to Program Coordinators. Selection of Department Heads is based on explicit analysis of terminal degree and more senior status for individuals.

The Off-Site Reaffirmation Committee's initial review of the Department Head Appointment & Responsibilities document and the lists of the department heads and program coordinators in the four colleges indicate that the institution assigns responsibility for program coordination to persons qualified for academic leadership. The individual vitae describing credentials and professional experience show that the Coordinators of degree programs are current in their fields and capable of providing oversight for curriculum development, delivery and review.

- 3.4.12** The institution's use of technology enhances student learning and is appropriate for meeting the objectives of its programs. Students have access to and training in the use of technology. **(Technology use)**

Compliance

Students at TAMU-C have appropriate access to computers to assist them in their studies. There is a distributed approach to computing with over 20 labs on the main campus and labs at all off-site locations. All have internet access and Microsoft Office Suite. Specialty, program-specific software is made available on certain lab computers at the request of the instructor. Many, but not all, labs have printers which use a convenient cashless card swipe system for payment. The largest computer lab with 84 computers is located in the main campus library where staff are available to support students in the use of computers and electronic research resources. Gee Library also boasts a multimedia lab to assist students in preparing audio/visual materials for presentations; a well-equipped instruction room for use of reference staff to provide instruction in the use of library study and research materials; and ADA compliance software for assisting visually impaired students.

Distance students are provided support during interactive classes by a video specialist and site facilitators. The eCollege Help Desk provides training and 24-hour support for students taking online courses. Library staff also assist distance users in the use of electronic research resources.

Faculty are supported in their mission to educate students. The Faculty Center for Teaching with Technology assist faculty in the use of technology, and classrooms on the main campus are equipped with appropriate presentation technology and Gee Library staff also support faculty in the use of electronic research resources.

The Office of IT Support Services supports all end users, students, faculty and staff with software and hardware technical support and troubleshooting via email, phone and in person.

- 3.5.1** The institution identifies college-level general education competencies and the extent to which students have attained them. **(General education competencies)**

Non-Compliance

Like other public institutions in the State, this institution adheres to the guidelines set by the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB) for establishing and implementing the general education core of courses (State Code Rule 4.28; University Policy 11.06.99.RO.01). Measuring the extent to which students have attained the competencies identified for core courses is also guided by THECB in what is called Exemplary Educational Objectives (EEO) for each area of knowledge represented in the core. Faculty members employ the EEOs as guides for developing student learning outcomes for the individual core courses. Data collected measuring student attainment of core competencies from 2009-2011 indicate that the University could not assess skills in each area of the EEOs. A formal assessment instrument from the Educational Testing Service was utilized (2006, 2009, 2010, 2011) to evaluate reading, writing and critical thinking. The number of students who sat for the examination was not large; the methods designed to attract a large group of students were unsuccessful.

The report narrative indicates that THECB, in November 2011, adopted new core guidelines which are skills-based. During academic year 2012-2013, the University faculty revised the institution's general education core based on the new guidelines and created SLOs that "will serve as the basis for assessment." The University acknowledges that it has had an "incomplete assessment structure."

- 3.5.2** At least 25 percent of the credit hours required for the degree are earned through instruction offered by the institution awarding the degree. (*See the Commission policy "Agreements Involving Joint and Dual Academic Awards: Policy and Procedures."*) (**Institutional credits for a degree**).

Compliance

TAMU-C's *Undergraduate Catalog* contains a policy statement concerning the twenty-five percent (25%) of course work rule. Compliance with the rule is monitored electronically through "Degree Works" advisement/degree audit software and through the graduation checklist which confirms the rule requiring academic departments and colleges to confirm that 25% of a student's course work has been completed at the University. Student transcripts also reflect where courses have been taken. The evidence also includes a statement from the Registrar that TAMU-C does not award collaborative degrees.

- 3.5.3** The institution publishes requirements for its undergraduate programs, including its general education components. These requirements conform to commonly accepted standards and practices for degree programs. (*See the Commission policy "The Quality and Integrity of Undergraduate Degrees."*) (**Undergraduate program requirements**)

Compliance

The Off-Site Reaffirmation Committee's review of the *Undergraduate Catalog*, the System's *Core Curriculum Assumptions & Defining Characteristics*

document, and program sheets related to various majors demonstrate that TAMU-C defines and publishes in print and on the Web the degree requirements for undergraduate degree programs. These requirements include the various courses and semester hours required for a general education experience of sufficient breadth and college-level rigor in the areas of reading, writing, speaking, listening, critical thinking and computer literacy. The processes related to approval and review of the State's core curriculum to promote articulation agreements for transfer of college credit among State-supported institutions along with external review conducted by specialized accrediting bodies in different fields, assist the institution in ensuring that the degree programs adhere to commonly accepted standards and practices for collegiate-level courses and programs.

- 3.5.4** At least 25 percent of the course hours in each major at the baccalaureate level are taught by faculty members holding an appropriate terminal degree—usually the earned doctorate or the equivalent of the terminal degree. **(Terminal degrees of faculty)**

Compliance

TAMU-C uses Texas A&M System guidelines to define course hours within the major. The Off-Site Reaffirmation Committee's review of the Total SCH Analysis demonstrates that faculty members holding a terminal degree in their fields taught 62.08% of the semester credit hours in the baccalaureate degree programs across all locations and various modes of delivery at the institution with the exception of Accounting where the percentage does not approximate the 25% threshold. Towards this end, documents provided to the Committee for review revealed a thorough disaggregation of data and complete reporting so that problems were identified and addressed by the institution. In cases where higher percentages of student credit hours were being generated by faculty without terminal degrees, documents show that the institution has taken action to address the situation by hiring faculty with terminal degrees immediately, making public commitments to hire new faculty in this academic year, or by identifying teaching faculty without terminal degrees for completion of terminal degrees in the field.

- 3.6.1** The institution's post-baccalaureate professional degree programs, and its master's and doctoral degree programs, are progressively more advanced in academic content than its undergraduate programs. **(Post-baccalaureate program rigor)**

Non-Compliance

Graduate work offered by the University is distinguished from undergraduate work in that the graduate student is expected to show increased maturity in scholarship, seriousness of purpose and the ability to think independently. TAMU-C has stated policies concerning Graduate faculty status, graduate program review, and statements in the *Graduate Catalog* about the level of work expected for graduate students. Course numbering sequence for graduate

courses is aligned with advanced undergraduate, master's and doctoral work (500, 600, 700 courses). Learning outcomes should differ between undergraduate, master's and doctoral experiences. However, sources of evidence from Biochemistry (Biochemistry CHEM 514, and Biochemistry CHM 414) syllabi refer to these courses as "...an introductory course for undergraduates and graduate students." In addition, close examination of the learning outcomes for CSCI 530-Operating Systems, graduate-level course ("1. List and understand basic functions and parts of an OS. 2. Understand modern memory management techniques, including virtual memory. 3. Know fundamental concepts of OS such as multiprogramming and multiuser systems. 4. Understand process management algorithms, structures and threading. 5. Understand issues with concurrent and parallel programming, including deadlocks. 6. Learn specific mechanisms for modern OS such as Linux and Windows Vista") are identical to CSCI 430-Operating Systems, an undergraduate course. Furthermore, both courses use the same textbook and suggest the same additional reading.

- 3.6.2** The institution structures its graduate curricula (1) to include knowledge of the literature of the discipline and (2) to ensure ongoing student engagement in research and/or appropriate professional practice and training experiences. **(Graduate curriculum)**

Compliance

The Off-Site Reaffirmation Committee's review of the *Graduate Catalog*, syllabi for graduate courses, representative theses, and Graduate Council Policy for the Masters Degree Research Component demonstrate that TAMU-C's graduate curricula includes courses, assignments and capstone experiences that enhance students' knowledge of literature of the discipline. Documents related to the Pathways Student Research Symposium, support for summer research assistance, syllabi for courses for advanced clinical practicum and field seminars, and examples of student presentations at national conferences demonstrate that graduate students are engaged in ongoing research or appropriate professional practice training experiences so as to contribute to a profession or field of study.

- 3.6.3** At least one-third of credits toward a graduate or a post-baccalaureate professional degree are earned through instruction offered by the institution awarding the degree. *(See the Commission policy "Agreements Involving Joint and Dual Academic Awards: Policy and Procedures.")* **(Institutional credits for a degree)**

Compliance

TAMU- C's *Graduate Catalog* publishes the "One-Third" rule and also establishes policy for transfer credit for master's and doctoral degree programs of study. *Course Requirements for the Master's Degree (Procedure, 11.04.99.R0.15)*, *Course Requirements for the Doctoral Degree (Procedure 11.04.99.R0.15)*, and the *Doctoral Student Handbook* are also among the documented evidence that provide statements concerning the "one-third of credit" policy. The report

narrative provides an explanation of the credit hour requirement for each level of graduate degree/certificate offered. The Degree Plan Review Form, which is a part of the departmental advisement plan, allows the University to verify that the rule has been followed.

- 3.6.4** The institution defines and publishes requirements for its graduate and post-graduate professional programs. These requirements conform to commonly accepted standards and practices for degree programs. **(Post-baccalaureate program requirements)**

Compliance

TAMU-C defines requirements for its graduate and post-baccalaureate professional programs using guidelines, regulations, policies, and procedures from the Texas Education Code (TEC), the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB), The Texas A&M University System, TAMU-C, specialized accrediting bodies, and the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC).

- 3.7.1** The institution employs competent faculty members qualified to accomplish the mission and goals of the institution. When determining acceptable qualifications of its faculty, an institution gives primary consideration to the highest earned degree in the discipline. The institution also considers competence, effectiveness, and capacity, including, as appropriate, undergraduate and graduate degrees, related work experiences in the field, professional licensure and certifications, honors and awards, continuous documented excellence in teaching, or other demonstrated competencies and achievements that contribute to effective teaching and student learning outcomes. For all cases, the institution is responsible for justifying and documenting the qualifications of its faculty. (See *Commission guidelines "Faculty Credentials."*) **(Faculty competence)**

Non-Compliance

The institution has clear practices of how they hire all faculty, including educational or employment standards, and required evidence of degree completion. Multiple forms of evidence for credential verification, signature approval and instructional competencies are provided.

The composition of the faculty in Mass Media Communications and Theatre at the University is made up of full-time and part-time faculty, and graduate teaching assistants. The credentials for this group appear to follow SACSCOC guidelines with one exception. One graduate teaching assistant has six graduate credit hours in the discipline. The individual has 20 graduate credit hours in foreign language courses, which does not appear to qualify him for teaching courses in public speaking.

- 3.7.2** The institution regularly evaluates the effectiveness of each faculty member in accord with published criteria, regardless of contractual or tenured status. **(Faculty evaluation)**

Non-Compliance

The Off-Site Reaffirmation Committee's review of University System policy documents and institutional documents describing procedures for the annual evaluation of faculty, and representative samples of completed faculty evaluations with names and sensitive information redacted, demonstrate that the institution regularly evaluates term appointment faculty, tenure track faculty and tenured faculty. Furthermore, the evaluation samples for faculty along with the procedures for the regular evaluation of instruction indicate that student learning is an important component of teaching effectiveness in the full-time faculty evaluation process, and in judgments about continued employment as faculty, merit pay increases, and review of performance for promotion, tenure and post-tenure. However, the institution's policies and procedures are silent on the issue of regular annual reviews of part-time or adjunct faculty and graduate students holding teaching appointments in departments and programs. Although part-time or adjunct faculty and graduate assistants serving as instructor of record for courses are evaluated by students enrolled in the courses being taught, no examples were provided of processes or procedures used by departments and programs for determining teaching effectiveness or continuing eligibility for shorter-term teaching appointments.

- 3.7.3** The institution provides evidence of ongoing professional development of faculty as teachers, scholars, and practitioners. **(Faculty development)**

Compliance

TAMU-C has various approaches to enhancing faculty development. Evidence exists that established committees and centers operate to assist faculty with instructional improvement and innovation, research opportunities and other forms of training. TAMU-C announces faculty development opportunities through emails and its Website. System policy (12.99.01) establishes leave policies for faculty and is linked to the process at the University.

- 3.7.4** The institution ensures adequate procedures for safeguarding and protecting academic freedom. **(Academic freedom)**

Compliance

Evidence exists at the System and institutional levels concerning academic freedom policies. The rights as a faculty member and as a citizen are clearly defined in local policy. There are also clear processes for grievances relative to potential issues with academic freedom. Documentation exists in critical promotion and tenure guidelines, *Faculty Handbook*, and System policy.

- 3.7.5** The institution publishes policies on the responsibility and authority of faculty in academic and governance matters. **(Faculty role in governance)**

Compliance

TAMU- C is aligned with Texas A & M System policies and procedures in the development and implementation of policies and regulations delineating the role of faculty in academic and governance matters. System rule 01.01.01.R0.02 sections 2.4 and 2.5, provides a frame for: a) the development, review and approval of regulations governing the academic community, b) the oversight of the curriculum, and c) student learning across University departments. In addition, the System has established guidelines for its institutions to organize Faculty Senates. Consequently, TAMU- C has developed a compendium of faculty governance policies and procedures. Committees addressing faculty issues are populated adequately with representation from that group. Summarily, the University recognizes that faculty members have responsibility for: a) the curriculum, b) academic program development, review, change and approval, and c) student learning. From its Website, the University links to the *System's Policies and Regulations Webpage*. It also publishes information on its *Rules and Procedures Webpage*, and in the *Faculty Handbook*. Policy changes are sent to each faculty member via the President's Office. The University also submitted the Faculty Senate Constitution as evidence.

- 3.8.1** The institution provides facilities and learning/information resources that are appropriate to support its teaching, research, and service mission. **(Learning/information resources)**

Compliance

The library facilities at the Commerce and Mesquite locations are of an appropriate size and design, offering the types of space and services which are in line with academic library user preferences throughout the nation. The library has created an Information Commons and offers group and single user study, computing and multi- media stations, a casual café space, quiet study zones and space for specialized collections accordingly. The libraries use industry standard, well respected and new technologies to aid in providing good access to their learning and information resources and provide the services in current demand by their users.

The library used the LibQual survey instrument in both 2005 and in 2012 to solicit meaningful feedback from its users and it has been very proactive in responding to user needs and requests. With regard to information resources, these surveys indicated a slight gap between actual and desired access to necessary collections particularly at the graduate and faculty levels. The library has applied systematic strategies to analyze and rectify this issue and has utilized standard assessment tools and usage statistics to review and identify where the collections are lacking. Consequently the library has initiated plans to bring collections up to date where necessary using an approval plan with a focus on ebooks to meet the needs of TAMU-C's academic programs and research fields.

TAMU-C also leverages consortia purchasing and reciprocal borrowing to expand its collections to meet the needs of its users.

- 3.8.2** The institution ensures that users have access to regular and timely instruction in the use of the library and other learning/information resources. **(Instruction of library use)**

Compliance

The institution provides a complete and up to date program of instruction in the use of library and information resources for faculty and students on both campuses and online. Instruction and assistance is offered by various methods: face to face, email, telephone, chat and text. Faculty may request general or tailored library instruction for their classes. Distance education students (and faculty) are served by librarians embedded in online classes.

Online research guides are available using the LibGuides platform which allows for real time revisions, multimedia content and 24/7 access online. Video and audio tutorials are also available from the library Webpages.

Since 2012, the libraries have greatly increased the number of information literacy classes offered, particularly to freshmen, international and graduate students. The library has ongoing program assessment in addition to surveys such as LibQual, and uses this feedback and appropriate new methodologies to make continual improvements.

- 3.8.3** The institution provides a sufficient number of qualified staff—with appropriate education or experiences in library and/or other learning/information resources—to accomplish the mission of the institution. **(Qualified staff)**

Compliance

Staffing levels are sufficient to accomplish the mission of the institution as indicated by the overall satisfaction levels in the LibQual surveys. The librarians appear to be well qualified by education and experience for their positions and responsibilities. A thorough revision of all staff job descriptions and classifications has been undertaken since 2007 and in 2011, librarians were reclassified from professional staff to professional faculty to recognize their importance to the academic endeavor.

Both faculty and staff are encouraged to participate in professional development in order to enhance job performance and satisfaction and all staff are evaluated annually by their immediate supervisors according to Texas A&M System guidelines. The library administration maintains up to date organization charts and job descriptions for all staff.

- 3.9.1** The institution publishes a clear and appropriate statement of student rights and responsibilities and disseminates the statement to the campus community. **(Student rights)**

Compliance

The institution complies with Texas A&M University System Policy 13.02 providing evidence of students rights and responsibilities, including codes of conduct that apply broadly to all students and those that apply specifically to certain subpopulations, such as the residential living and learning codes. Appropriate appeals are afforded and due process rights are addressed. Information is included in the *Student Guidebook* and distributed to all students through orientation as well as through multiple other units and means, primarily online with hardcopies available in the Office of the Assistant Dean of Campus Life and Student Development.

- 3.9.2** The institution protects the security, confidentiality, and integrity of its student records and maintains security measures to protect and back up data. **(Student records)**.

Compliance

To protect student Social Security Numbers, all students are assigned a distinctive 8-digit, campus-wide ID. TAMU-C complies with the University System Records Retention Schedule, and relevant laws such as HIPAA and FERPA. All employees complete online FERPA compliance training, and identified employees continue FERPA training every two years. Institutional information security policies comply with Texas Administrative Code (TAC) §202.1. Data is housed in Banner and is backed up three times during the day with a full nightly off-site backup. The annual risk management plan includes a disaster recovery plan that restores student data within 30 days of a disaster. The Counseling Center uses Titanium, which is HIPAA compliant, though the Center itself is not a HIPAA facility. Enrollment, financial aid, and disability data is housed in FORTIS imaging system. Payment data is processed through Touchnet. Some offices operate primarily on hardcopy files and have security plans and disposal schedules, of which judicial affairs is in the process of transitioning to an electronic database system.

- 3.9.3** The institution provides a sufficient number of qualified staff—with appropriate education or experience in the student affairs area—to accomplish the mission of the institution. **(Qualified staff)**

Compliance

The Division of Student Access and Success was created in 2009 in response to NSSE data to improve the student experience and success. The Division employs 156 full-time staff members and over 200 part-time student employees. Key Division leaders all possess appropriate graduate degrees and credentials, many of whom have served over 10 years at the institution. Professional

development is demonstrated through participation in the employee scholarship program for those enrolled in graduate programs, continued education through the Training and Development office, and a chart documenting activity in professional associations and conferences.

3.10.1 The institution's recent financial history demonstrates financial stability.
(Financial stability)

Compliance

Assets available to meet day-to-day obligations are very adequate. Unrestricted net assets exclusive of plant and related debt for the five years 2008 – 2012 are substantial with steady growth in the most recent periods. During this period, Unrestricted Net Assets increased 59.4% primarily due to increased tuition revenue related to enrollment growth and increases in tuition rates during the period. Total revenue increased 50.3% during the same five year period. Total revenue received from the State of Texas has decreased from 44.4% of total revenue in FY 2008 to 30.0% in FY 2013. During this period, the University increased tuition to compensate. Tuition rates have increased 30.6% from FY 2009 through FY 2013 with no noticeable impact on enrollment. During the same five-year period, annual headcount grew 27.3% from 8,787 to 11,187 and SCHs increased 29.2%.

To accommodate growing enrollment, a campus renovation/renewal program began in 2006. Indebtedness increased 74.3% during the five-year period 2008 - 2012. The Texas A&M University System is responsible for the sale of bonds within its revenue financing system; Texas A&M Commerce is responsible for the annual debt payments. Texas A&M System Revenue Financing System Bonds currently have a bond rating of AAA by Moody's and AA+/Stable by Standard & Poor's. There are well documented debt management procedures and the Texas A&M System Board of Regents ensures the University is financially capable of making debt service payments prior to allowing the issuance of the bonds.

Affiliated Foundation and Alumni Association fund raising activities provide additional fiscal support to the University, with approximately 1,600 donors as of August, 2012. From 2008 - 2012, \$6.0 million in contributions, grants and bequests have been made to the affiliated entities. During the same period cumulative endowment balances have increased 17.1%. University permanently restricted net assets are not currently significant.

The Vice President for Business and Administration (VPBA) is charged by the President with insuring financial stability of the institution and has an experienced staff to assist. The VPBA is a certified public accountant and has 30 years of experience as a CFO with 6 years as VPBA and is a graduate of CBMI. Key staff include an Associate Vice President for Business & Administration and an Executive Director of Budget, each with extensive higher education experience. The University Budget Review and Development Council is charged by the President with developing a budget that closely aligns with the mission.

- *3.10.2** The institution audits financial aid programs as required by federal and state regulations. **(Financial aid audits)**

Compliance

TAMU-C undergoes regular audits of its financial aid programs, including Student Financial Aid, as required by federal and State regulations. Audits are authorized by the Texas A&M System Board of Regents as documented by policy. These audits are conducted by the Texas A&M University System Internal Audit Department. As a State entity, the University undergoes audits biennially. The University is also audited by the Texas State Auditor's Office, with the University clearly delineated in the Texas State report. For the fiscal year ended August 31, 2012, the National State Auditors Association (NSAA) noted The Texas State Auditor's Office provides "reasonable assurance of conforming to government auditing standards".

The University appropriately responds to audit report recommendations. In 2012, a follow-up audit by the State Auditor's Office noted that corrective actions had taken place and the status would be concluded as implemented. The final audit report to the State of Texas reported the University had no deficiencies or it had been determined that findings cited in the audit have been satisfactorily resolved.

- 3.10.3** The institution exercises appropriate control over all its financial resources. **(Control of finances)**

Compliance

A strong system of internal controls exists, which includes comprehensive policies, regulations and procedures. Active monitoring against these policies, regulations and procedures, is conducted by the comptroller, the compliance office, and Texas A&M System Internal Audit. There is good executive oversight, with both the University President and the Texas A&M Board participating in budget review and approval as referenced in Board minutes. In addition there is a campus Office of Compliance to assist in communication and training, etc. The division of business administration works with other areas to ensure that resources are appropriated in accordance with the strategic plan. Financial personnel have the requisite credentials to perform their jobs. Prior to hiring an individual, a criminal background check is completed, and credentials with transcripts are required to ensure that personnel are qualified.

Written policies and procedures exist for key financial resources and related functions, including cash controls, contracts and purchase orders, endowment funds, expenditure approval, investing, and payroll. Texas A&M System internal audit routinely prepares risk analyses and performs audits and reviews. Recent internal audits or reviews include faculty hiring, financial management services, and physical plant operations. The University appropriately responds to recommendations and it appears Texas A&M System audit follows up as necessary.

3.10.4 The institution maintains financial control over externally funded or sponsored research and programs. **(Control of sponsored research/external funds)**

Compliance

The University's Chief Research Officer is the Vice Provost for Research and Dean of Graduate studies, who works closely with the Associate Vice President for Business and Administration in managing pre-award and post-award processes. Both individuals have excellent credentials and experience in the management and control of these activities along with appropriate support staff.

Grant award policies and procedures for both pre- and post-award processes are well documented and available online with routine training available. The University has a current, approved F&A rate agreement with the Federal Department of Health and Human Services.

The University maintains a centralized pre-award process whereby all sponsored projects and contracts are negotiated, submitted, and managed by Office of Research and Sponsored Programs pre- and post-award specialists to ensure contract awards are reviewed and approved appropriately. Externally funded sponsored programs are segregated in individual accounts and classified as restricted funds to facilitate accountability and review as to significant items such as sufficient funds availability, expenditure allowance, and appropriate accounting as to time period.

The State of Texas contracted KPMG LLP, certified public accountants, to conduct the federal portion of the 2012 statewide single audit, including a review of compliance and controls over the State's federal awards and an audit of the Schedule of Expenditures of Federal Awards. The report, along with the financial portion of the statewide single audit performed by the State Auditor's Office, was submitted to the federal government to fulfill the OMB A-133 single audit reporting requirements. There were no findings in the report related to federal funds received for sponsored programs. The University appropriately responds to Texas A&M System internal audits as exemplified by a recent audit of an Advanced Research Program award.

3.11.1 The institution exercises appropriate control over all its physical resources. **(Control of physical resources)**

Compliance

The University conducts an annual physical inventory for both on and off-campus locations. Inventories are available online. In addition, the University submits capital asset information routinely to the State. The University maintains procedures for handling surplus/salvage property. The process includes appropriate approvals for control.

Deferred maintenance is identified during routine maintenance and building inspection and the building inventory is updated to reflect the appropriate building

condition index. An annual facility campus condition index is submitted to THECB to assist in ensuring existing physical facilities are maintained adequately.

Insurance coverage for physical structures and contents is procured through FM Global. Coverage is secured with a replacement cost basis. Annual inspections are performed by independent contractors and/or state inspectors. The University also makes use of special insurance coverage as needed (i.e., fine art and specialized equipment).

- 3.11.2** The institution takes reasonable steps to provide a healthy, safe, and secure environment for all members of the campus community. **(Institutional environment)**

Compliance

The University Police Department (UPD) is staffed 24/7 and includes patrol, criminal investigation, dispatch, administration and security. The UPD maintains a close working relationship with all local law enforcement agencies and submits the annual Clery compliance reports. There is an alert warning system on campus as well as numerous emergency phones. Safety Standards are communicated and published online. The University also has a behavioral intervention team to assist with inappropriate behaviors, etc.

The University utilizes an appropriately equipped Emergency Operation Center for emergency preparedness and follows the operational aspects of the National Incident Management System. Several types of testing are utilized for training, including “real-life” situation scenarios.

The University’s Department of Risk Management and Safety conducts safety inspections of all University facilities, offices, classrooms, laboratories, and work sites. Inspection summaries are reviewed as necessary with supervisory and management staff. In addition this office ensures federal, state, and local regulatory compliance.

- *3.11.3** The institution operates and maintains physical facilities, both on and off campus, that appropriately serve the needs of the institution’s educational programs, support services, and other mission-related activities. **(Physical facilities)**

Compliance

The University maintains a Master Plan appropriately linked to the Strategic Plan as mentioned in Standard 2.11.2. Campus maps are available on line as well as a visual “walking tour” of facilities. Processes for routine, preventive, and deferred maintenance are in place and physical plant facility surveys allow the University to monitor the state of facilities and related services.

Both on and off-site campus classrooms and office space are equipped with supportive technology and many classrooms have advanced interactive

whiteboards. Computer labs are available at campus and remote locations. Network infrastructure has been updated and the storage area network has been enhanced to accommodate enrollment growth.

- 3.12.1** The institution notifies the Commission of changes in accordance with the Commission's substantive change policy and, when required, seeks approval prior to the initiation of changes. *(See the Commission policy "Substantive Changes for Accredited Institutions.")* **(Substantive change)**

Non-Compliance

The Compliance Report of TAMU-C identifies several instances in which SACSCOC was not notified and approval received in advance of the initiation of new programs. The report indicates that the SACSCOC has now been notified of these omissions and that institutional processes have been initiated to assure compliance. The New Program and Curriculum Approval Process and the accompanying flow chart demonstrate that there is a process in place to assure that SACSCOC is notified in advance of substantive changes. The University has one outstanding issue with the Commission regarding the L-3 classroom in Greenville, Texas. The University has delayed development of the L-3 classroom until approval is received from the SACSCOC. Until this issue is resolved, the University is non-compliant.

- 3.13.1** The institution complies with the policies of the Commission on Colleges. **(Policy compliance)**

***3.13.1. "Accrediting Decisions of Other Agencies"**

Applicable Policy Statement. Any institution seeking or holding accreditation from more than one U.S. Department of Education recognized accrediting body must describe itself in identical terms to each recognized accrediting body with regard to purpose, governance, programs, degrees, diplomas, certificates, personnel, finances, and constituencies, and must keep each institutional accrediting body apprised of any change in its status with one or another accrediting body.

Documentation: The institution should (1) list federally recognized agencies that currently accredit the institution or any of its programs, (2) provide the date of the most recent review by each agency and indicate if negative action was taken by the agency and the reason for such action, (3) provide copies of statements used to describe itself for each of the accrediting bodies, (4) indicate any agency that has terminated accreditation, the date, and the reason for termination, and (5) indicate the date and reason for the institution voluntarily withdrawing accreditation with any of the agencies.

Compliance

The University has two programs that are accredited by bodies recognized by the U. S. Department of Education. For the National Association of Schools of Art and Design, the report presents its accreditation review from 2010 and subsequent documentation in 2011 and 2013. These documents indicate that the Department of Art is in good standing. The documentation for the accreditation of the Department of Music consists of the listing of the University's

accredited degrees in music on the website of the National Association of Schools of Music. The University is indicated as being in good standing and is presented in identical terms as in the documentation for NASAD.

3.13.2 “Agreements Involving Joint and Dual Academic Awards: Policy and Procedures”

Applicable Policy Statement. Member institutions are responsible for notifying and providing SACSCOC with signed final copies of agreements governing their collaborative academic arrangements (as defined in this policy). These arrangements must address the requirements set forth in the collaborative academic arrangements policy and procedures. For all such arrangements, SACSCOC-accredited institutions assume responsibility for (1) the integrity of the collaborative academic arrangements, (2) the quality of credits recorded on their transcripts, and (3) compliance with accreditation requirements.

Documentation: The institution should provide evidence that it has reported to the Commission all collaborative academic arrangements (as defined in this policy) that included signed final copies of the agreements. In addition, the institution should integrate into the Compliance Certification a discussion and determination of compliance with all standards applicable to the provisions of the agreements.

Compliance

The Off-Site Reaffirmation Committee’s review of documents related to a cooperative Ed.D. program in Educational Administration with Texas A & M University-Texarkana (now closing), collaborative agreements for shared locations, and the collaborative agreement for the Federation of North Texas Area Universities, demonstrate that the institution notifies and provides SACSCOC with signed final copies of collaborative academic arrangements. System documents about Collaboration Among System Academic Institutions and institutional policies and procedures for Articulations Agreements and MOU demonstrate that institution enters agreements with intentionality and responsibility for academic integrity of the relationships, the quality of academic credits, and compliance with accreditation requirements.

***3.13.3 “Complaint Procedures Against the Commission or Its Accredited Institutions”**

Applicable Policy Statement. Each institution is required to have in place student complaint policies and procedures that are reasonable, fairly administered, and well-publicized. (See *FR 4.5*). The Commission also requires, in accord with federal regulations, that each institution maintains a record of complaints received by the institution. This record is made available to the Commission upon request. This record will be reviewed and evaluated by the Commission as part of the institution’s decennial evaluation.

Documentation: When addressing this policy statement, the institution should provide information to the Commission describing how the institution maintains its record and also include the following: (1) individuals/offices responsible for the maintenance of the record(s), (2) elements of a complaint review that are included in the record, and (3)

where the record(s) is located (centralized or decentralized). The record itself will be reviewed during the on-site evaluation of the institution.

Compliance

The institution encourages dispute resolution at the lowest possible level, emphasizing direct communication among involved parties. Formal protocols exist for grade appeals through the appropriate academic dean's office, with a log being forwarded to the Provost's office beginning fall 2013. Other formal written complaints are submitted to the Dean of Campus Life and Student Development. The Student Guidebook includes details on which offices and individuals manage specific types of complaints. To encourage informal dialogue, the Vice President of Student Access and Success began hosting monthly student forums in 2010 with minutes posted online. That division also implemented in fall 2009 a "WeCare" survey that students can submit online, and the appropriate department responded within 24 hours. Evidence includes a copy of the Student Concern Report, available online, and the Student Concern Report Log, which includes the original date of complaint, student name, student campus ID, individual and/or department related to the complaint, a question asking if the complaint was addressed at the individual/department level, a question asking if the complaint was resolved at that level, a note of the next level intervention, the results of that intervention, and the date the student was notified of the resolution. The form itself captures additional information not included in the log, like address, home and cell phone numbers, descriptive text of the concern, and an opportunity for complainant to indicate a desired outcome.

3.13.4 "Reaffirmation of Accreditation and Subsequent Reports"

***3.13.4.a. Applicable Policy Statement.** An institution includes a review of its distance learning programs in the Compliance Certification.

Documentation: In order to be in compliance with this policy, the institution must have incorporated an assessment of its compliance with standards that apply to its distance and correspondence education programs and courses.

Compliance

The Off-Site Reaffirmation Committee's review of the Compliance Certification and other documentation demonstrates that the TAMU-C has provided a review of its compliance with standards that apply to distance and correspondence education programs and courses.

3.13.4.b. Applicable Policy Statement. If an institution is part of a system or corporate structure, a description of the system operation (or corporate structure) is submitted as part of the Compliance Certification for the decennial review. The description should be designed to help members of the peer review committees understand the mission, governance, and operating procedures of the system and the individual institution's role with in that system.

Documentation: The institution should provide a description of the system operation and structure or the corporate structure if this applies.

Compliance

TAMU-C is the second largest university of The Texas A&M University System, a 21 member organization consisting of eleven universities, each with its own mission, history and goals. TAMU-C joined the Texas A&M University System in 1996.

The Texas A&M System, and therefore, TAMU-C, is governed by a Board of Regents that has the power to, “make bylaws, rules, and regulations it deems necessary and proper for the government of the University System and its institutions, agencies, and services”. The Board of Regents consists of nine members appointed by the governor with the advice and consent of the Senate.

The Chancellor is appointed by the Texas A&M System Board of Regents to be responsible for the management and operation of the Texas A&M System under the board. The Chancellor reports directly to the board, and has responsibilities to supervise, direct and represent the Texas A&M System in all matters.

Each member university of the Texas A&M System is led by a president who serves as CEO of the institution. Presidents are appointed by the Board of Regents and serve under the direction of the Texas A&M University System Chancellor. The president’s duties include administration and leadership of the member university. The university president also leads the development, implementation and enforcement of TAMU-C rules and procedures, which are unique to the institution.

3.13.5 “Separate Accreditation for Units of a Member Institution”

***3.13.5.a. Applicable Policy Statement.** All branch campuses related to the parent campus through corporate or administrative control (1) include the name of the parent campus and make it clear that its accreditation is dependent on the continued accreditation of the parent campus and (2) are evaluated during reviews for institutions seeking candidacy, initial membership, or reaffirmation of accreditation. All other extended units under the accreditation of the parent campus are also evaluated during such reviews.

Documentation: For institutions with branch campuses: (1) The name of each branch campus must include the name of the parent campus—the SACSCOC accredited entity. The institution should provide evidence of this for each of its branch campuses. (2) The institution should incorporate the review of its branch campuses, as well as other extended units under the parent campus, into its comprehensive self-assessment and its determination of compliance with the standards, and indicate the procedure for doing so.

Not Applicable

3.13.5.b. Applicable Policy Statement. If the Commission on Colleges determines that an extended unit is autonomous to the extent that the control over that unit by the parent or its board is significantly impaired, the Commission may direct that the extended unit seek to become a separately accredited institution. A unit which seeks separate accreditation should bear a different name from that of the parent. A unit which is located in a state or country outside the geographic jurisdiction of the Southern Association of

Colleges and Schools and which the Commission determines should be separately accredited or the institution requests to be separately accredited, applies for separate accreditation from the regional accrediting association that accredits colleges in that state or country

Implementation: If, during its review of the institution, the Commission determines that an extended unit is sufficiently autonomous to the extent that the parent campus has little or no control, the Commission will use this policy to recommend separate accreditation of the extended unit. **No response required by the institution.**

Not Applicable

- 3.14.1** A member or candidate institution represents its accredited status accurately and publishes the name, address, and telephone number of the Commission in accordance with Commission requirements and federal policy. **(Publication of accreditation status)**

Compliance

The Compliance Certification documents that TAMU-C represents its accreditation accurately and publishes relevant Commission information with copies of its *Undergraduate Catalog* and *Graduate Catalog* (page 2), the University Accreditations Webpage, and other appropriate sites.

D. Assessment of Compliance with Section 4: Federal Requirements

- *4.1** The institution evaluates success with respect to student achievement consistent with its mission. Criteria may include: enrollment data; retention, graduation, course completion, and job placement rates; state licensing examinations, student portfolios; or other means of demonstrating achievement of goals. **(Student achievement)**

Non-Compliance

TAMU-C provides some data on enrollment, persistence, graduation and course completion. Most evidence is not current (most recent data is 2011). The narrative offers no evaluation or explanation for data, and does not relate the evidence to its mission. Target success levels were not presented, hence there is no evidence available to determine if expectations are being met.

- *4.2** The institution's curriculum is directly related and appropriate to the mission and goals of the institution and the diplomas, certificates, or degrees awarded. **(Program curriculum)**

Compliance

The Off-Site Reaffirmation Committee's review of the Strategic Plan 2011-2015 – Mission Statement, Goals Statement, and Vision Statement, a A-Z list of Degree Programs Offered, and documents from representative programs demonstrate

that the institution's academic programs carry out the institution's Mission and Goals. Specifically, the diplomas, certificates and degrees awarded by the institution align with the institutional mission and goals as well as adhere to good practices in higher education.

- *4.3** The institution makes available to students and the public current academic calendars, grading policies, and refund policies. **(Publication of policies)**

Compliance

Calendars and policies are published in University catalogs, *Student Guidebook*, and on the Registrar's Website. All documents are updated at least once annually and available online, with hardcopies available upon request. The online documents provide the students and the public with the academic calendar, grading policies, and the refund policy. The institution also provides a comprehensive Rules and Procedures Webpage containing all University rules and procedures.

- *4.4** Program length is appropriate for each of the institution's educational programs. **(Program length)**

Compliance

Program length at the institution is aligned with state standards for all degrees at the undergraduate and graduate levels. Evidence from the *Undergraduate Catalog* supports the conclusion that no undergraduate degrees exist that has fewer than 120 semester credit hours. Some baccalaureate degrees have more than the minimum 120 semester credit hours due to discipline-specific accreditation issues. Evidence from the *Graduate Catalog* shows that graduate degree program length varies, but no master's degrees have fewer than 30 semester credit hours, and doctoral program requirements conform to either a minimum of 60 semester credit hours or 90 semester credit hours depending on whether the student enters the program as post-masters or post-baccalaureate. Evidence of compliance comes from the undergraduate and graduate catalogs, curricular review process documents, specific program requirement from the TAMU-C Website, and the State Higher Education policy.

- *4.5** The institution has adequate procedures for addressing written student complaints and is responsible for demonstrating that it follows those procedures when resolving student complaints. (See the Commission policy "Complaint Procedures against the Commission or its Accredited Institutions.") **(Student complaints)**

Compliance

TAMU-C established a central location for guiding students to the appropriate person and process for resolution of complaints, available online through a one-stop Webpage containing a Complaint Resolution Matrix. Formal Grade Appeals

are maintained by the appropriate College Dean's Office with a log forwarded to the Provost's Office, effective fall 2013. Formal Written Complaints are processed through the Dean of Campus Life and Student Development using a consistent Student Concern Report Form. A Student Concerns Flow Chart details the specific steps for resolving formal complaints. In addition, informal resolution options are provided by the Vice President of Student Access and Success through monthly forums and an online "WeCare" survey.

- *4.6** Recruitment materials and presentations accurately represent the institution's practices and policies. **(Recruitment materials)**

Compliance

To assure proper representation in promotional materials, the University has established a design process that assures review of all recruiting materials by academic and service units, with oversight by the Dean of Enrollment Management. A representative sample of brochures, including the Freshman Start Guide, the freshman and transfer flyers, and a middle school flyer demonstrate that the University is accurately presented. The institution's recruitment theme "Start Your Legacy Here!" employs various publications and media that represent the diversity of the student body. The Office of Marketing Communications collaborates with various offices to create a marketing plan and design hard copy and electronic materials. Materials are tailored for specific purposes and populations.

- *4.7** The institution is in compliance with its program responsibilities under Title IV of the most recent Higher Education Act as amended. (In reviewing the institution's compliance with these program responsibilities, the Commission relies on documentation forwarded to it by the U.S. Department of Education.) **(Title IV program responsibilities)**

Compliance

TAMU-C is regularly audited to ensure continued compliance. There are no indications of any infractions that would jeopardize Title IV or state financial aid funding.

The Title IV programs offered include the following: Pell Grant, Federal Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grant (FSEOG), Work-study, Perkins Loan, Teacher Education Assistance for College Grant (TEACH Grant), Direct Subsidized Stafford Loan, Direct Unsubsidized Stafford Loan, Parent Loan for Undergraduate Students (PLUS) and Graduate PLUS Loan.

Based on Department of Education data, both the two-year and the three-year student loan default rate for the University are lower than the average for other Texas institutions (11.5%) during this same time period.

TAMU-C's financial aid programs are audited as required by federal and state regulations and Texas A&M System policy as mentioned in Comprehensive

Standard 3.10.2. Recent findings cite incorrect cost of attendance (COA) calculations with minimal impact. During FY 2012, corrective action was finalized, and the final audit report found no deficiencies or it was determined that the findings cited in the audit had been satisfactorily resolved.

TAMU-C has not been placed on any direct reimbursement method for federal funds and has not been obligated to post a letter of credit on behalf of the U.S. Department of Education or other regulatory agency.

***4.8** An institution that offers distance or correspondence education documents each of the following: **(Distance and correspondence education)**

4.8.1 demonstrates that the student who registers in a distance or correspondence education course or program is the same student who participates in and completes the course or program and receives the credit by verifying the identity of a student who participates in class or coursework by using, at the option of the institution, methods such as (a) a secure login and pass code, (b) proctored examinations, or (c) new or other technologies and practices that are effective in verifying student identification.

Compliance

The institution has login password protection for all distance learning student as evidenced by existing policy on password standards, student conduct code, and examples of login screens. Distance students use a secure login and password to verify identity when logging into courses via the University myLEO portal. Passwords are changed every 120 days. University policies 25.99.08.R1 and 29.01.03.R0.02 address expectations related to telecommunication services, information security, and falsification or misuse of identity and technology. Faculty members are being trained on how to use multiple assessment methodologies to maintain the integrity of distance education.

4.8.2 has a written procedure for protecting the privacy of students enrolled in distance and correspondence education courses or programs.

Compliance

The institution has a written policy (13.99.99.R0.02) with regard to record keeping and test scores that is cross-linked with Federal Records privacy law. In addition there exists System policy (61.01.02) with regard to state-wide linkage to Federal regulation. Other evidence includes the TAMU-C Website concerning student and parental rights.

Student privacy and confidentiality of records are maintained through University Procedure 13.99.99.R0.02 and University System Policy 33.05.02, which addresses FERPA compliance and employee training.

- 4.8.3** has a written procedure distributed at the time of registration or enrollment that notifies students of any projected additional student charges associated with verification of student identity.

Not Applicable

The institution, through its Website publishes the tuition and fees paid by matriculated students. No fee exists for verification of student identification. A schedule of all student fee projects is published on the Admissions Website and students are notified of all fees charged at registration.

- *4.9** The institution has policies and procedures for determining the credit hours awarded for courses and programs that conform to commonly accepted practices in higher education and to Commission policy. (See *the Commission policy "Credit Hours."*) **(Definition of credit hours)**

Compliance

TAMU-C adheres to Federal, State, Texas A&M System and TAMU-C regulations, policies and procedures regarding the definition of credit hours. In addition, a comparison of sample syllabi from standard, face-to-face courses with online courses, at the University and departmental level, illustrates that TAMU-C has sound procedures and follows them in defining credit hours.