



February 16, 2017

Dr. Belle S. Wheelan, President
Southern Association of Colleges and Schools
Commission on Colleges
1866 Southern Lane
Decatur, GA 30033-4097

Dear Dr. Wheelan,

In 2013, Texas A&M University-Commerce established a hybrid competency-based Bachelor of Applied Arts and Sciences program with a degree in Organizational Leadership. We received SACSCOC approval of the program on December 19, 2013, after submitting a modified prospectus, as directed by your staff. This program has proved successful, and we are ready to expand the competency-based program to include an additional major.

Please accept this letter as notification of our intent to offer a new hybrid competency-based Bachelor of Science in Criminal Justice major under our current Texas Affordable Baccalaureate program. The new major will not be a significant departure from the existing program currently being offered as a hybrid competency-based program.

We would like to begin offering the new major in fall 2018, or as soon thereafter as all required approvals are received. The program would be offered in the same online format as the BAAS Organizational Leadership program is being offered.

The structure of the new TAB major, a Bachelor of Science in Criminal Justice, will follow closely the successful model approved for our BAAS Organizational Leadership program. This hybrid competency-based online program is targeted to certified first responders, military personnel, and adult learners with criminal justice employment experience. Initially, the program will serve 15 students in the first seven-week term in the fall of 2018 and is projected to serve 75 students in FY 18-19. As with the current major under the TAB Program, this new major will be designed to support the goals of the state's higher education strategic plan and has been awarded development funding by the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board.

The new major will be built on the foundation of the existing competency-based general education curriculum. Because employability of students is of vital importance, the curriculum will be designed so that competencies and learning outcomes are tied to specific courses for lower division courses. When students reach the upper-division courses, a cohort model will be used to deliver instruction in the same manner as in most online degree programs, but students will have the ability to accelerate during the seven-week terms. The learning outcomes and

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objectives in the upper division courses will be aligned with competencies identified by academic and agency stakeholders.

Through this lower-cost, competency-based format, students can work at a pace that is most appropriate for their level of ability in a forum that allows for learning at a personalized pace via an online learning platform. Student support services will be provided by the success coaches and advisors in the College. Because Texas A&M University-Commerce has a proven model for support services for TAB programs, the same processes and services will be provided.

To provide some background, our existing hybrid competency-based program, the BAAS in Organizational Leadership, was approved by SACSCOC (see approval letter enclosed) in December 2013. The program was developed as a collaborative project with the College for All Texans Foundation, South Texas College, Texas A&M University-Commerce, and the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB). The THECB submitted the proposal for this initiative and became the recipient of a Next Generation Learning Challenges (NGLC) Wave IIIb grant in 2012. University faculty, THECB staff, and business/industry representatives invested over a year developing the curriculum and policies associated with the TAB Program.

Following SACSCOC approval as a substantive change, the program admitted its first class of students in January 2014. With a current enrollment of 306 students, the program has 121 graduates as of December 2016. A term-to-term retention rate of 92% and average cost-to-degree savings of \$8,720 for students point to the success of this program. The following is a more in-depth description of the TAB Program, highlighting points relevant to SACSCOC and Department of Education requirements:

Admission to the TAB Program is the same as for all students at A&M-Commerce. For example, freshmen students meet class rank and specific ACT/SAT score requirements. Transfer students must have completed at least 21 transferable hours (excluding developmental coursework) with a 2.0 GPA. In addition, admission to the competency-based BAAS in Organizational Leadership is contingent upon students' demonstration of college readiness. If students' scores on the SAT or ACT, or other state-approved assessment instrument, indicate that they require developmental education, they will not be admitted to this program.

Competencies and rigorous learning objectives were developed for, and mapped back to, all courses in the program. The degree consists of a total of 120 semester credit hours (SCH) as follows:

- 42 hours—general education curriculum
- 48 hours—professional development electives
- 30 hours—applied major courses

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If the degree is awarded by Texas A&M University-Commerce, at least 30 of the semester credit hours for coursework must be taken from A&M-Commerce.

The program is delivered online at a flexible pace within year-round seven-week terms. Students pay a flat rate of \$750 per term, registering for two initial courses and moving forward only when they achieve the requisite competencies in those two courses with an 80% mastery rate. Faculty members of record meet the SACSCOC Comprehensive Standard 3.7.1 of the Principles of Accreditation, Faculty Credentials. They work closely with students to provide regular and substantive interaction on course subject matter. An academic coach closely monitors and guides the student over the course of his or her pursuit of the degree.

Delivery and instruction is provided in the same manner as other online courses and programs, using the university's learning management system and both synchronous and asynchronous delivery modes. Established protocols are followed in order to determine that credit hours awarded comply with Federal Requirement 4.9, "Definition of Credit Hours," and ensure that the amount of work is comparable to that of face-to-face courses.

Federal guidelines regarding financial aid are followed. For example, in order for students to be considered full-time and receive federal, state, or institutional financial aid, the student must register for and complete 12 SCHs per academic semester. In other words, students must complete two courses each seven-week term—a total of four within each of the fall, spring, or summer semesters.

Please let us know if additional information is needed.

Sincerely,



Ray M. Keck, III, Ph.D.
President

Copies: Dr. Mary Kirk
 Dr. John Humphreys
 Dr. Shonda Gibson
 Dr. Salvatore Attardo
 Dr. Martha Hurley

Enclosure



December 19, 2013

Dr. Dan R. Jones
President
Texas A&M University-Commerce
P.O. Box 3011
Commerce, TX 75428

Dear Dr. Jones:

Thank you for your letter of November 14, 2013, conveying the modified prospectus for the proposed competency-based Bachelor of Applied Arts and Sciences in Organizational Leadership degree program to be delivered in hybrid format, beginning January 2014.

General education and lower-division coursework will be offered online as competency-based modules, while upper division coursework will be offered in a traditional cohort format, also online. The proposed program appears to fit into traditional learning models that measure progress in credit or clock hours and does not include a direct assessment component. The University was approved for online delivery in 2003. **We accept the notification and require no additional information.**

Best regards,

Belle S. Wheelan, Ph.D.
President

BSW/SLA:efk

cc: Dr. Marila Palmer, Associate Provost for Institutional Effectiveness and Planning
Dr. Barry D. Goldstein