SACS COC

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: March 4-6, 2014

COC Staff Member: Dr. Barry D. Goldstein

Chair of the Committee   Dr. Terry M. McConathy
Vice President for Academic Affairs
Louisiana Tech University
Ruston, LA

Part I.   Overview and Introduction to the Institution

Overview

The purpose of the Reaffirmation Committee's visit is to be of value to the institution and to the Commission. It is not the purpose of the Reaffirmation Committee to accredit the institution but to evaluate the institution's compliance (including at sites off-campus where the institution delivers instruction) with the *Principles of Accreditation* of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges.

The Report of the Reaffirmation Committee is the final committee analysis and report that includes the findings of the Off- and On-Site Reaffirmation Committees. It will be forwarded to the institution for a formal response. The report and the institution's response are forwarded to the Commission's Board of Trustees for action on reaffirmation of accreditation.

Introduction to the Institution

Texas A&M University-Commerce was founded in 1889 as the East Texas Normal College in Cooper, Texas. In 1996, the University became a member of The Texas A&M University System. Texas A&M University-Commerce, located 60 miles northeast of the Dallas-Fort Worth Metroplex, offers programs including agriculture, science, engineering, music, nursing, and distance education programs.   As the second-largest member in the Texas A&M University System, Texas A&M University-Commerce is home to more than 11,000 students, more than 120 degree programs, and four academic colleges: Education and Human Services; Business and Entrepreneurship; Humanities, Social Sciences, and Arts; and Science, Engineering, and Agriculture. The majority of students come from Dallas and 38 other Texas counties. In addition, Texas A&M University-Commerce provides education to students from many other states and typically has over 800 international students enrolled.

The institution operates five locations offering 50% or more of programs: The Universities Center at Dallas, Navarro College Partnership-Corsicana, Mesquite Metroplex Center, Texas A&M Commerce at Rockwall, and Collin Higher Education Center in McKinney. Locations offering less than 49% of programs are Midlothian Higher Education Center, Commerce Independent School District, Melissa Independent School District, and Region 8 Educational Service Center. The Institution also operates Texas A&M University-Commerce Online to deliver online programs asynchronously.

The Texas A&M University System, and, therefore, Texas A&M University-Commerce, 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 University System Board of Regents to be responsible for the management and operation of the Texas A&M University System under the Board. The Chancellor reports directly to the Board and has responsibilities to supervise, direct, and represent the Texas A&M University System in all matters.

Each member university of the Texas A&M University System is led by a president who serves as CEO of the institution. The President of Texas A&M University-Commerce is appointed by the Board of Regents and serves under the direction of the Texas A&M University System Chancellor. The President's duties include administration and leadership of Texas A&M University-Commerce. The President also leads the

development, implementation, and enforcement of Texas A&M University-Commerce rules and procedures, which are unique to the institution.

Comments of the Reaffirmation Committee

The Reaffirmation Committee commends the Institution for the quality and consistency of arrangements and hospitality extended during their visits to the main campus and the Institution's off-campus sites. The Reaffirmation Committee extends particular thanks to Dr. Dan Jones, President; Dr. Marila Palmer, Associate Provost for Institutional Effectiveness and Accreditation Liaison; and Ms. Rebecca Hanstad, Administrative Support Staff.

Part II. Assessment of Compliance

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

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

The Reaffirmation Committee believes that Texas A&M University-Commerce conducts all operations with 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)**

Section 87.551 of the Texas Education Code established the institution, then named East Texas State University, as a degree-granting institution of higher education within the Texas A&M University 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)**

As part of the Texas A&M University 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 in each class, 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 ensure 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 Texas A&M University-Commerce, 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)**

Following Texas A&M University System Policy 02.05, Texas A&M University-Commerce'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 University System. The President may not serve as a Regent and, therefore, does not qualify to preside over the Board.

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, development and implementation 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)**

The mission statement of Texas A&M University-Commerce 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)**

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 use of NSSE and Texas State Higher Education Accountability reports; however, there is insufficient evidence that the process is systematic or institutionalized.

The institution produced three strategic plans in the last decade: 2004-07, 2007-12, and 2011-15. (The overlap in years of the two most recent plans is a result of alignment with The Texas A&M University System timeline.) The institution focused on the 2007-12 plan in its Compliance Report and provided evidence that the strategic planning process is integrated and institution-wide.

The On-Site Reaffirmation Committee reviewed additional analysis of the 2011-15 plan conducted by the Strategic Leadership Team in Fall 2013 that had been previously delayed because of leadership changes. Progress was rated as incomplete (I), emerging (E), progressing (P), or accomplished (A) for each Strategic Plan Imperative and Strategy, and documentation was provided for each. Of the 26 indicators, 14 had been accomplished or shown substantial progress, 9 were emerging, and 3 were still incomplete. In addition, a University-wide review of the mission statement, strategic planning assessment meetings, solicitation of broad-based involvement, assessment data, procedures, designated assessment responsibilities, and timelines has been implemented. The institution has also clarified facilitation of the strategic planning by assigning responsibility for facilitation to the Chief of Staff and updated its policies and job descriptions to reflect that change. Overall, the On-Site Reaffirmation Committee found that the institution addressed the concerns noted in the Off-Site Committee report and has confirmed that the institution engages in ongoing, integrated, and institution-wide strategic planning that demonstrates that the institution is effectively accomplishing its mission and has evaluation processes that result in continuing improvement at the institutional level.

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

Texas A&M University-Commerce has been in continuous operation since 1889. Enrollment data submitted by the University for Fall 2008 through Fall 2012 indicate

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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)**

Texas Education Code 61 defines semester credit hour requirements for baccalaureate degrees in accord with the SACSCOC minimum of 120 semester credit hours. With a few exceptions resulting from 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 requirements 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 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 with fewer 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 Master's 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)**

The Reaffirmation Committee's review of Texas A&M University-Commerce's Mission Statement, the Undergraduate Catalog, and Graduate Catalog confirms that the institution offers degree programs consistent with 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)**

Texas A&M University-Commerce 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 Core Curriculum: Assumptions and Defining Characteristics. The University's rationale for general education is expanded in *the Catalog. The* University Studies program at Texas A&M University-Commerce 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." Texas A&M University-Commerce'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 documents faculty and administrative processes that govern the general education course consideration and approval processes, and the assessment plan for University Studies courses.

The On-Site Reaffirmation Committee reviewed the undergraduate catalog and materials provided on site, and conducted interviews with the Dean of the University College, the Chair, and other faculty members on the University Studies Council, and the Director of Student Assessment in support of the institution's case for compliance. The On-Site Reaffirmation Committee affirms the findings of the Off-Site Reaffirmation Committee.

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)**

Texas A&M University-Commerce 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 using 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)**

Statistical data presented as evidence demonstrate that the institution has full-time faculty who teach the majority of courses (range 51.6-52.2%) and the 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 to address the problem of "heavy reliance on adjunct faculty and underrepresentation of full-time faculty in some programs."

The On-Site Reaffirmation Committee conducted interviews with the Provost, the Deans of two of the Colleges, and multiple faculty members and reviewed pertinent documentation, including course schedules and faculty rosters, in support of the institution's case for compliance. The On-Site Reaffirmation Committee affirmed the Off-Site Reaffirmation Committee's findings that the number of full-time faculty members is adequate to support its mission and that the University has sufficient faculty to ensure the quality and integrity of each of its academic 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)**

According to the documentation submitted, Texas A&M University-Commerce is focused on providing its faculty and students access to adequate library collections and services wherever they are studying, whether at resident or distance sites, or online. The Library administered the LibQual survey instrument in 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 physical facilities are of an appropriate size, and improvements have been made recently to provide the University community with the types of spaces 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 Library has also been responsive to user requests by improving services: greatly expanding Library open hours, and providing computer and equipment circulation, a multi-media center, and additional outreach programming.

While, in general, the University community is satisfied with the Library's 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 Texas A&M University-Commerce'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 serve the growing number of distance education students better. Additionally, Texas A&M University-Commerce 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)**

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 promote the University's mission of providing "a personal educational experience for a diverse community of life-long learners" effectively. 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 institution's Compliance 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, following 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 learners' needs are also being addressed through SoftChalk software, added in Fall 2013.

The On-Site Reaffirmation Committee reviewed documents (Student Guidebook, One-Stop Shop, Undergraduate and Graduate Catalogs, and websites) in support of the institution's case for compliance and affirms the findings of the Off-Site Reaffirmation Committee. It appears that the range and structure of support services, programs, and activities are appropriate to support the University's mission and to enhance and strengthen the comprehensive learning experiences for students attending Texas A&M University-Commerce. The network of academic, social, personal, and career development services provide appropriate and accessible resources for all students to utilize to support their success. Improved scores on recent National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) surveys highlight a positive trend in students' satisfaction with the level of services they expect on campus, and with their overall experiences. Results from the recent Student Access and Success Satisfaction Survey will be shared with departments and off-site campuses to continue to improve the level of support services for all students.

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)**

Required documentation of Standard Review Report for the most recently completed Fiscal Year 2013 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 Texas A&M University-Commerce.

The University is not required to have annual detailed audits. As an agency of Texas, Texas A&M University-Commerce 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 four most recent years - 3%, 13%, 4%, 4%, respectively, with a 27% increase overall since 2008. This trend has provided a steady revenue stream with clear indications this trend 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. Texas A&M University-Commerce's Board approved the FY13 operating budget as documented in the minutes. Texas A&M University-Commerce's President links budget to the University strategic planning through annual communications. State appropriations are provided biennially.

The On-Site Reaffirmation Committee reviewed and analyzed the financial materials provided by the institution, including the Financial Statements and Independent Account's Review Report for the year ending August 31, 2013, which included Management's Discussion and Analysis. The On-site Reaffirmation Committee also interviewed the Vice President for Business and Administration.

A Certified Public Accountant from the State Auditor Office of Texas indicated that the statements are understood to be in conformity with generally accepted accounting principles.

The institution provided a statement of financial position which indicated that total current assets are $41 million, and the total net position for the year ending August 31, 2013 is $227,477,872. This represents an increase of $29 million from the previous year.

The institution has had to adapt to a shift in funding more dependent on tuition and fees (and a decrease in State funding); their revenues have exceeded expenses by over $10 million. The University reserves are significant, with an increase the past year to a total of over $100 million. The University is investing $20 million in new construction on campus. The University's investment income was more than $1 million in the past year.

The On-Site Reaffirmation Committee affirms that the institution has a sound financial base and financial stability to support the mission of the institution and its programs and services.

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)**

The University operates and maintains 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 site 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 are 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 thirty days.

The Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board 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 Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board standards and, therefore, indicate that Texas A&M University-Commerce appears capable of handling the growth in enrollment as indicated by enrollment trends.

Texas A&M University-Commerce 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 Texas A&M University-Commerce community and was developed based on Texas A&M University-Commerce'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 includes appropriate indicators, such as enrollment trends, academic program plans, and student demographics. It considered existing and potential future facility needs for Texas A&M University-Commerce'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, Texas A&M University-Commerce conducts student surveys. Students consider the buildings safe, with good-to-average parking and above-average maintenance of computer labs.

The Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board establishes building condition codes that are updated as deferred maintenance is identified and completed. None of Texas A&M University-Commerce's facilities is currently coded as requiring major physical updating and/or modernization. No facilities at Texas A&M University-Commerce have ever been identified for demolition or termination because of 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)**

The On-Site Reaffirmation Committee has determined that the Institution developed an acceptable QEP. See Part III for additional information.

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)**.

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)**

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 that the Board 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 is 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

According to State law, approval for Texas A&M University-Commerce's 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 Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board on July 30, 2010.

3.2.2.2 the fiscal stability of the institution

Responsibility for the financial viability of Texas A&M University-Commerce 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 Texas A&M University-Commerce's financial statements present the true financial situation of the University.

3.2.2.3 institutional policy

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://TAMUcommerce.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)**

In addition to State law, Texas A&M 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)**

Chapter 85 Subchapter B Section 85.11 and Chapter 51 Section 51.355 (b) of the Texas Education Code establish 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 offer 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)**

State law creates two mechanisms for dismissal of Board members: impeachment by the House and confirmation 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.

The Governor, with the advice and consent of the two-thirds of the Texas Senate, appoints members of the Texas A&M University System Board of Regents. Texas Education Code specifies the grounds for the removal of a Board member. These policies are reviewed annually with all Board members.

The On-Site Reaffirmation Committee reviewed documents to determine the appropriate reasons for dismissal of members of the Board. To date, no Board members of the Texas A&M University System have been dismissed by the Governor, with consent from the Texas Senate. An interview with a Texas A&M System Regent affirmed that Board members are aware of the process and that the process is very robust. As the Texas Constitution states that the Governor of Texas and two-thirds of the members of the Texas State Senate must remove a Board member, it is apparent that reasons for dismissal are appropriate and involve a fair process.

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)**

State law, System policies, Texas A&M University-Commerce procedures, and the 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)**

The organizational structure is clear and coherent and is readily available on Texas A&M University-Commerce'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)**

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.

The On-Site Reaffirmation Committee reviewed documents and conducted interviews in support of the institution's case for compliance and affirms the findings of the Off-Site Reaffirmation Committee. The Committee verified the qualifications of the administrative and academic officers in an interview with the Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs. The Dean of the College of Education and Human Services is currently filled by an interim appointee who has appropriate credentials and experience

to lead the College. A permanent Dean has been hired and will begin at the institution on April 1, 2014.

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

Employment appointments and evaluation procedures at Texas A&M University-Commerce are guided by policies and regulations of the Texas A&M University System. Texas A&M University-Commerce 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. Texas A&M University-Commerce 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. Texas A&M University-Commerce 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)**

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 Policy 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)**

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 oversight over athletics.

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

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)**

Texas A&M University System Policy 60.01 and 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 is a separate 501(c)(3) non-profit organization: The Texas A&M University-Commerce Foundation and The Texas A&M University-Commerce Alumni Association.

The Vice President for Institutional Advancement reports to the Texas A&M University-Commerce 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 fundraising activities in cooperation with the College Deans and the Athletic Director to identify fundraising priorities.

The Foundation was organized as a private support organization to accept gifts for the benefit of Texas A&M University-Commerce 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 Texas A&M University-Commerce programs, deserving students, faculty, and staff in meeting the education needs of the University. The Foundation Board includes Texas A&M University-Commerce 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)**

Texas A&M University-Commerce relies on the Texas A&M System's Office of Technology Commercialization 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 Office of Technology Commercialization sponsors various training opportunities in this area for member schools. To supplement System offerings, Texas A&M University-Commerce is in the process of establishing an Intellectual Advisory Committee through its Office of Research and Sponsored Programs. The University should use the Office of Technology Commercialization policy as a frame for developing its campus-specific Intellectual Property Policy.

The institution has responded to the Off-Site Reaffirmation Committee's statement that it should utilize the System's Office of Technology Commercialization policy as a frame for developing its own campus-specific Intellectual Property Policy by drafting and approving an Intellectual Property section in its published Rules and Procedures guidelines. Section 17.01.99.R0.01 is a procedure that provides guidance in complying with the policy and regulation as directed by the Texas A&M University System with regard to intellectual property. The procedure is specific to Texas A&M University-Commerce and was approved on January 14, 2014. This procedure is also found on the Office of Research and Sponsored Programs website.

On-campus interviews with two of the members of the Deans' Council who approved the procedure confirmed that the institution has appropriately implemented the Off-Site Reaffirmation Committee's suggestion. These individuals were knowledgeable about and well satisfied with the recently adopted Intellectual Property Policy that is specific to this institution. In addition, the institution had been in the process of establishing an Intellectual Advisory Committee to supplement System offerings at the time the Focused Report was submitted, and these interviews also affirmed that this Advisory Committee has now been formed.

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

The Off-Site Reaffirmation Committee found that 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 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 and 2011 to develop some general plans for program improvement in Political Science, General Business, Political Science, and Early Childhood Generalist programs. The institution should include all degree programs in their assurance of the learning process, wherever or however delivered. The institution 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.

The On-Site Reaffirmation Committee's review of additional assessment data shows some improvement in assessment processes at the institution; however, the institution still does not fully meet expected criteria. Eighty-eight percent of the academic programs submitted results for the 2012-13 cycle, and 97% have more appropriate plans for the 2013-14 cycle. Use of results often focuses on improvement of the assessment process itself, which is indicative of an immature assessment system. While improving the assessment process is needed and will help in improving the assessment of learning, the focus within the individual assessment plans needs to evolve toward making changes that will affect the improvement of learning outcomes across all programs. A number of programs, such as Education Administration (MA/MEd) and General Psychology (MS), provide no assessment results. The institution might further benefit by consistently disaggregating data by site and delivery mode to determine the impact of different pedagogical approaches. The Committee met with the Associate Provost for Institutional Effectiveness and a professor serving as College of Education representative on the Institutional Effectiveness Leadership Team. They confirmed that certificate programs are embedded in degree program assessment and that there are no stand-alone certificate programs. The institution acknowledges its challenges and the need to provide complete documentation on the refined student learning outcomes; however, the institution has not provided evidence that it assesses the extent to which it achieves these outcomes and makes improvement based on analysis of the results in its educational programs.

Recommendation 1: The Committee recommends that the institution identify expected outcomes, assess the extent to which it achieves the outcomes, and provide evidence of improvement based on analysis of the results in its educational programs.

3.3.1.2 administrative support services

The Off-Site Reaffirmation Committee noted that the institution 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 documents improvement based on analysis of the results in its administrative support services.

The On-Site Reaffirmation Committee found that the institution has made progress in strengthening its assessment processes in the area of administrative support services and has addressed the concerns noted above. The Committee reviewed assessment documentation from 21 administrative support service units including assessment reports from the 2012-13 cycle and plans for the 2013-14 cycle. The 2012-13 reports show that the institution identifies expected outcomes, assesses the outcomes, and provides evidence of improvement based on analysis of the results. For instance, in the area of procurement, the Department of Purchasing identified stewardship as an area critical to their success and established a goal to increase procurement card transactions in lieu of purchase orders. They reported that procurement card transactions increased from 59.25% in FY 11 to 63.6% in FY12 and 70.91% in FY 13. In addition, assessment plans for 2013-14 were provided that show improvement in the assessment process by establishing more comprehensive outcomes tied to the units' essential purpose and functions. Other units, such as the Faculty Center for Teaching with Technology, use surveys to gauge faculty satisfaction in receiving timely and effective support related to teaching with technology. The Center is using results to gain further input and improve their services.

3.3.1.3 academic and student support services

The Off-Site Reaffirmation Committee noted that the institution 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.

The On-Site Reaffirmation Committee found that the institution has made progress in strengthening its assessment processes in regard to academic and student support services. The Committee reviewed assessment documentation from 24 academic and student support services including assessment reports from the 2012-13 cycle and assessment plans for the 2013-14 cycle. The 2012-13 reports show that the institution identifies expected outcomes, assesses the outcomes, and provides evidence of improvement based on analysis of the results. For example, the Honors College established a goal to track and improve the quality of honors theses. The target was a score of 8 or higher. The findings showed that the target was not met, so the thesis preparation class has been altered to make expectations more concrete and a thesis guide is being designed to disseminate to advisors. The Office of Hispanic Outreach established a goal to increase Hispanic student enrollment by 5% over the previous year in an effort to attain Hispanic Serving Institution status (25% Hispanic enrollment). At the time of the report, the number of Hispanic student applications and admitted students was up from the prior year by 13% and 19%,

respectively. In analyzing the data, the Office noted that they do well in outreach and getting applications, but they need to improve their conversion rate and make sure admitted students enroll through improved coordination with Admissions and Orientation offices.

3.3.1.4 research within its mission, if appropriate

The Off-Site Reaffirmation Committee noted that 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 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 unit's 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 provides evidence of improvement based on analysis of the results for research within its mission.

There has been some ongoing evaluation in the research enterprise for at least five years, and the process does demonstrate compliance with the standard.

The institution includes the Office of Research and Sponsored Programs (ORSP) as the only unit that is a research unit by its primary function. The institution has provided documentation in the form of an email from the Director of ORSP that there are no research centers, studios, or labs exclusive to one type of research at Texas A&M University-Commerce and thus no assessment for such units. This was confirmed by the Committee through an interview with the Director of the Office of Research and Sponsored Programs and the Vice Provost for Research and Dean of Graduate Studies.

The institution provided assessment for the ORSP for 2007-08, 2008-09, 2009-10, 2010-11, 2011-12, and 2012-13. Outcomes, targets, and findings were included for these years. Documentation of the use of results was included in the 2012-13 cycle. Specifically, the institution noted that proposal submissions increased by 1% (no raw numbers were included). The use of results for this finding was reported as follows: "...will utilize the newly hired staff and the occurrence of a 1% increase of proposal submissions in FY 13 to form a strategic plan for increasing proposal submissions by 5% for FY 14." The Committee also reviewed the strategic plan as evidence that the unit is acting upon its use of results and mid-year progress toward the current cycle. Overall, the Committee finds that the institution has addressed the concerns of the Off-Site Committee and that 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 the area of research.

3.3.1.5 community/public service within its mission, if appropriate

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 Texas A&M University-Commerce, with several pockets of service-related activities being conducted by University entities, faculty, staff, and students with varying degrees of organization and accomplishment. While Texas A&M University-Commerce 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.

The institution has identified three units to be designated as community/public service units for the purposes of this standard: Community Engagement, KETR Radio Station, and the Planetarium. The institution provided assessment reports for two of the entities, KETR and the Planetarium, for the 2012-13 cycle; however, these reports do not demonstrate evidence of improvement based on analysis of the results. KETR provided results for 2011-12 in the 2012-13 report, but did not include findings for 2012-13. The Planetarium included attendance numbers for 2006-2013 and planned strategies for increasing attendance for 2013-14. Results are understandably not available for Community Engagement, given that the office was only recently established during the 2012-13 cycle. All three units have developed improved assessment plans that show establishment of outcomes, appropriate measures, and appropriate targets; however, the institution has not documented that it provides evidence of

improvement based on analysis of the results in the area of community/public service.

Recommendation 2:   The Committee recommends that the institution identify expected outcomes, assess the extent to which it achieves the outcomes, and provide evidence of improvement based on analysis of the results in the area of community/public service.

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)**

The Institution satisfactorily addressed components of this Standard. See Part III for additional information.

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)**

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 for educational programs and the existence of appropriate curriculum committees.

Programs for which academic credit is awarded at Texas A&M University-Commerce are approved by the faculty and administration. New program proposals are initiated within the pertinent academic department. The process described in the document, University Procedures, supplements the Texas A&M System policy and the System regulations. The Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board is the final level of approval. In addition, Texas A&M University-Commerce reports any substantive changes, especially in the method of program delivery, to the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges. 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)**

The Reaffirmation Committee's review of the mission statement and publications describing outreach activities such as the Murphy Day webpage, the 2013 Distinguished Alumni Symposium, the Small Business Entrepreneur Conference, and the KETR MBR Radio Station webpage demonstrates that the 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)**

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 Texas A&M University-Commerce mission. The report narrative and supporting documents present the methods utilized by academic departments that have specific admission criteria.

The On-Site Reaffirmation Committee reviewed documents in support of the institution's case for compliance and affirms the findings of the Off-Site Committee. A review of University websites, the undergraduate and graduate catalogs; the freshman, transfer, and graduate Admissions application material; and particular program and department guidelines indicates a close alignment with Texas Education Code Section 51.803 and University System Policy 11.04.

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)**

Texas A&M University-Commerce 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. Texas A&M University-Commerce 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 Reaffirmation Committee found that Texas A&M University-Commerce employs clearly defined and published rules and policies for evaluating, awarding, and accepting credit for coursework. The University ensures that the coursework 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)**

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 Texas A&M University 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)**

Texas A&M University-Commerce 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 rules. This system 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)**

Policy statements from the Texas A&M System and the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges govern the Texas A&M University-Commerce process for entering into consortia/contractual agreement with other academic institutions. Agreements are guided by procedure 11.99.99.R0.05 Articulation Agreements and Memorandums of Understanding and by SACSCOC policy. The University Registrar confirmed via email that no collaborative degrees are offered at Texas A&M University-Commerce. Texas A&M University-Commerce maintains consortial relationships with other educational entities in order to provide students access to for-credit courses or programs they need most. According to Texas A&M University-Commerce 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)**

Texas A&M University-Commerce does not award credit for coursework 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)**

The institution provides a broad array of academic support appropriate for students and faculty. 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.

The On-Site Reaffirmation Committee's review of printed and website materials; interviews with the director of the Faculty Center for Teaching with Technology, the director of Student Assessment, the Coordinator of the Academic Success Center; and interviews with students at Commerce, Universities Center at Dallas, and Collin Higher Education Center provide evidence of adequate and appropriate academic support available to faculty and to students.

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

Accountability for curriculum approval and review processes at Texas A&M University-Commerce rests with the faculty. University Policy (03.02.99.RO.01) makes it clear that faculty are 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 consist of

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 appropriate 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 ensure 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)**

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.

The On-Site Reaffirmation Committee conducted interviews with the Provost, the Deans of two of the Colleges, and multiple faculty members and reviewed pertinent documentation in support of the institution's case for compliance. The On-Site Reaffirmation Committee affirmed the Off-Site Reaffirmation Committee's findings that the institution assigns responsibility for program coordination for all undergraduate and graduate degrees, majors, and concentrations to persons academically qualified in the field.

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)**

Students at Texas A&M University-Commerce 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-compliant 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 assists faculty in the use of technology, and classrooms on the main campus are equipped with appropriate presentation technology. 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)**

Like other public institutions in the State, this institution adheres to the guidelines set by the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board 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 the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board in what is called Exemplary Educational Objectives for each area of knowledge represented in the core. Faculty members employ the Exemplary Educational Objectives 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, and 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 the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board, in November 2011, adopted new core guidelines which are skills based. During academic year 2012-13, the University faculty revised the institution's general education core based on the new guidelines and created student learning outcomes that "will serve as the basis for assessment." The University acknowledges that it has had an "incomplete assessment structure."

The On-site Reaffirmation Committee reviewed a) general core course proposal protocols, b) the general core competencies, c) the Process and Schedule for Core Curriculum Revision, and d) Texas A&M University-Commerce's plan to assess student

learning outcomes in the general education core courses. The Committee also met with the Dean of University Studies, and the Chair and faculty members of the University Studies Council. While the institution is making progress in its ability to meet this standard, to date, Texas A&M University-Commerce has not assessed and analyzed the general education core and is, therefore, unable to determine the extent to which students have attained the competencies identified in the general education core.

Recommendation 3: The Committee recommends that the institution document the extent to which students have attained the University's college-level general education competencies.

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)**.

Texas A&M University-Commerce's Undergraduate Catalog contains a policy statement concerning the 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 Texas A&M University-Commerce. Student transcripts reflect where courses have been taken. The evidence also includes a statement from the Registrar that Texas A&M University-Commerce 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)**

The 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 Texas A&M University-Commerce 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)**

Texas A&M University-Commerce uses Texas A&M University System guidelines to define course hours within the major. The 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)**

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.

Texas A&M University-Commerce 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.

The Off-Site Reaffirmation Committee cited examples of courses that were cross-listed as both undergraduate and graduate, yet the requirements and learning outcomes in the syllabi were not significantly different for the two levels. The institution responded by providing revised syllabi for these courses that show an increased level of rigor for the graduate level courses in terms of student learning outcomes, readings, assignments, and depth of comprehension. Four additional examples of cross-listed courses across the various colleges were offered in the Focused Report as evidence that the institution requires more rigorous coursework in its post-baccalaureate programs.

The Fall 2013 and Spring 2014 class schedules listed on the institution's website specify when a course is cross-listed as graduate/undergraduate. A review of a sampling of courses still revealed a few instances where the graduate and undergraduate syllabi seemed identical or were only differentiated to a minimal level.

On-campus interviews with four faculty members who teach cross-listed graduate/ undergraduate courses indicate that each of the cross-listed courses is indeed distinct in terms of rigor and requirements for the graduate and undergraduate levels. The faculty have provided sufficient justification by reviewing their syllabi on site and clearly explaining the content and strategies in their classes at the different levels. In addition, interviews with two College deans confirmed that cross-listed courses that include both graduate and undergraduate students have recently been reviewed to ensure that coursework is appropriate for each level and that additional rigor is in required for graduate students. As evidence indicates that graduate coursework in cross-listed courses is at a higher level, the institution might consider updating syllabi, where appropriate, to clearly differentiate between the two program levels.

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)**

The Reaffirmation Committee's review of the Graduate Catalog, syllabi for graduate courses, representative theses, and Graduate Council Policy for the Master's Degree Research Component demonstrate that Texas A&M University-Commerce's graduate curricula include 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)**

Texas A&M University-Commerce'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 11.03.99.R0.14), and the Doctoral Student Handbook are also among the documented evidence that provides 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)**

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

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)**

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 do not appear to qualify him for teaching courses in public speaking.

The On-Site Reaffirmation Committee examined the documentation provided by the institution in the Focused Report and during the on-site visit, and affirms that Texas A&M University-Commerce employs competent faculty members who are qualified to teach in their respective disciplines and to accomplish the institution's mission and goals.

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)**

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, demonstrates 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.

The Off-Site Reaffirmation Committee noted that, at the time of the Compliance Certification's submission, the institution did not have adequate procedures in place for the evaluation of adjunct faculty and graduate assistants who teach.

In the Focused Report, the institution has provided evidence that it had addressed this issue by creating procedure 12.99.99R0.11 Annual Evaluation of Adjunct Faculty and Graduate Assistants with Teaching Responsibilities. It implemented this procedure in Fall 2013 and provided samples of faculty evaluations for adjunct and graduate assistant instructors using the standardized form it developed.

On-campus interviews with two adjunct faculty members who taught in Fall 2013, with two College deans, and with the Provost indicate that this new procedure for effective and systematic evaluation of part-time instructors is in force and valued by faculty and administrators alike. Adjunct faculty members described the process of being evaluated by their supervisors, and it seemed comparable to that which full-time faculty members would experience.

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

Texas A&M University-Commerce 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. Texas A&M University-Commerce 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)**

Evidence exists at the System and institutional levels concerning academic freedom. The rights as a faculty member and as a citizen are clearly defined in local policy, and there are also clear processes for grievances relative to potential issues with academic

freedom. Documentation exists in 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)**

Texas A&M University-Commerce is aligned with Texas A & M University System policies and procedures in the development and implementation of policies and regulations delineating the role of faculty in academic and governance matters. Texas A&M University-Commerce Rule 01.01.01.R0.02 Sections 2.4 and 2.5 provide 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 Texas A&M University System has established guidelines for its institutions to organize Faculty Senates. Consequently, Texas A&M University-Commerce 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 through 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)**

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. 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 Texas A&M University-Commerce's academic programs and research fields. Texas A&M University-Commerce 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)**

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 are 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 Library has 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)**

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 University 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)**

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).**

All students are assigned a distinctive 8-digit, campus-wide ID to protect student Social Security Numbers. Texas A&M University-Commerce 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 §202.1. Data are housed in Banner and 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 are housed in FORTIS imaging system. Payment data are 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)**

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)**

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 resulting from 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 University-Commerce is responsible for the annual debt payments. Texas A&M University 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 University System Board of Regents ensures that the University is financially capable of making debt service payments prior to allowing the issuance of the bonds.

Affiliated Foundation and Alumni Association fundraising 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 is charged by the President with ensuring financial stability of the institution and has an experienced staff to assist. The VPBA is a certified public accountant, has thirty years of experience as a CFO with six 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)**

Texas A&M University-Commerce 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 University 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 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.

The On-Site Reaffirmation Committee reviewed the Final Audit Determination issued by Federal Student Aid, an office of the United States Department of Education and affirms the findings of the Off-Site Reaffirmation.

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

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 University System Internal Audit. There is good executive oversight, with both the University President and the Texas A&M University System Board of Regents 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, the institution completes a criminal background check, 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 University 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 University System Internal 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)**

The University's Chief Research Officer is the Vice Provost for Research and Dean of Graduate Studies and 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 University 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)**

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 the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board 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)**

The University Police Department is staffed 24/7 and includes patrol, criminal investigation, dispatch, administration, and security. The University Police Department 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 intervene with inappropriate student 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)**

The University maintains a Master Plan appropriately linked to the Strategic Plan as mentioned in Standard 2.11.2. Campus maps are available online as is 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.

The On-site Reaffirmation Committee reviewed documents, toured facilities, and conducted interviews with the Vice President for Business Affairs and Administration in support of the institution's case for compliance and affirms the findings of the Off-Site Reaffirmation Committee. The On-Site Reaffirmation Committee toured the McDowell Administration Building (which also houses the College of Business Administration and Entrepreneurship), the Music Building, the Rayburn Student Center, the Keith D. McFarland Science Building/Planetarium, and the Jerry D. Morris Recreational Center, The On-site Reaffirmation Committee affirms the findings of the Off-Site Reaffirmation Committee.

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))**

The Off-Site Reaffirmation Committee noted that the Compliance Report of Texas A&M University-Commerce identifies several instances in which SACSCOC was not notified and approval received in advance of the initiation of new programs. The report indicates that SACSCOC has now been notified of these omissions and that institutional processes have been initiated to ensure compliance. The New Program and Curriculum Approval Process and the accompanying flow chart demonstrate that there is a process in place to ensure 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.

The On-Site Reaffirmation Committee reviewed the evidence and documentation provided in the institution's Focused Report and confirmed on site that Texas A&M University-Commerce submitted its request for approval of the L-3 classroom to SACSCOC in January 2014.

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.

The University has two programs that are accredited by bodies recognized by the United States 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 the National Association of Schools of Art and Design.

The On-Site Reaffirmation Committee reviewed the National Association of Schools of Music and National Association of Schools of Art and Design listings of accredited institutions and confirmed the programs' accredited status in interviews with the Dean of the College of Humanities, Social Sciences & Arts. The On-Site Reaffirmation Committee affirms the findings of the Off-Site Reaffirmation Committee.

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.

The Reaffirmation Committee's review of documents related to a cooperative Ed.D. program in Educational Administration (now online) with Texas A & M University-Texarkana, collaborative agreements for shared locations, and the collaborative

agreement for the Federation of North Texas Area Universities, demonstrates 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 the 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.

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 responds 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, such as address, home and cell phone numbers, descriptive text of the concern, and an opportunity for the complainant to indicate a desired outcome.

The On-Site Reaffirmation Committee reviewed documents (list of posted resources, and the formal policies and procedures outlined in the Student Guidebook-Student Rights, and on the University website, Judicial Affairs/Student Concerns website, One Stop Shop (WeCare) website, and the Dean of Students' Office website) and conducted interviews (with the Dean of Students) in support of the institution's case for compliance and affirms the findings of the Off-Site Reaffirmation Committee. The

evidence supports the finding that the campus makes a concerted effort to provide students with ready portals through which a variety of concerns or complaints can be presented for formal review. A more thorough and consistent process to review formal grade appeals at the Dean's level and Provost's level at the end of each semester was implemented in the Fall 2013 semester. Coupled with a very clear process for the submission of written complaints, there are strong indicators that the campus makes every effort to provide accessible and direct ways for issues to be identified and addressed. The available Student Concern Report Form by which a complaint may be submitted appears to trigger an appropriate and timely response by the proper office/staff member, and these files are maintained in the Dean of Students Office for verification.

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.

The Off-Site Reaffirmation Committee's review of the Compliance Certification and other documentation demonstrated that Texas A&M University-Commerce provided a review of its compliance with standards that apply to distance and correspondence education programs and courses.

The On-Site Reaffirmation Committee reviewed a sampling of academic program documents and conducted interviews with faculty and students at locations in Collin and Dallas in support of the institution's case for compliance and affirms the findings of the Off-Site Reaffirmation Committee.

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.

Texas A&M University-Commerce 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. Texas A&M University-Commerce joined the Texas A&M University System in 1996.

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

Each member university of the Texas A&M University System is led by a president who serves as CEO of the institution. The President of Texas A&M University-Commerce is appointed by the Board of Regents and serves under the direction of the Texas A&M University System Chancellor. The President's duties include administration and leadership of Texas A&M University-Commerce. The President also leads the development, implementation, and enforcement of Texas A&M University-Commerce 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

The On-Site Reaffirmation Committee confirmed that Texas A&M University-Commerce does not operate branch campuses.

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)**

Texas A&M University-Commerce represents its accreditation accurately and publishes relevant Commission information in its Undergraduate Catalog and Graduate Catalog (page 2), on the University Accreditations webpage, and on 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)**

The Off-Site Reaffirmation Committee noted that Texas A&M University-Commerce 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.

The institution provided documentation to the On-Site Reaffirmation Committee outlining a number of measures of student achievement in keeping with its mission, including retention rates, graduation rates, course completion data, degrees conferred, gainful employment data, and enrollment data. Targets or thresholds of acceptability are explained and are used to determine student achievement. The data provided in the Focused Report are current in that they include 2012-13 in all instances where feasible. The Focused Report response also included explanation of the data presented and related the evidence to its mission. Teacher certification data were included showing annual pass rates on the Texas Examinations of Educator Standards test (n= was not included). Data were also included for the Medical College Admission Test (MCAT) (n= 22). The Committee reviewed additional licensing documentation at the on-site visit including data for the Certified Public Accountancy examination and exam passage rates for Social Work at the bachelor's and master's levels to have a more representative sample of licensing programs at the institution. Overall, the Committee found that the institution evaluates success with respect to student achievement consistent with its mission.

*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)**

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

The On-Site Reaffirmation Committee conducted interviews with the Provost and Deans of two of the Colleges and reviewed pertinent documentation, including course schedules and the University catalog, in support of the institution's case for compliance. The On-Site Reaffirmation Committee affirmed the Off-Site Reaffirmation Committee's findings that the institution's curriculum is directly related and appropriate to the mission and goals of the institution and the diplomas, certificates, or degrees awarded.

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

Calendars and polices are published in University catalogs, in the 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 refund policy. The institution also provides a comprehensive Rules and Procedures Webpage containing all University rules and procedures.

The On-Site Reaffirmation Committee reviewed documents (undergraduate and graduate catalogs, Student Guidebook, Registrar's Office web site) in support of the institution's case for compliance and affirms the findings of the Off-Site Reaffirmation Committee.

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

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 because of 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 at the post-master's or post-baccalaureate level. Evidence of compliance comes from the undergraduate and graduate catalogs, curricular review process documents, specific program requirements from the Texas A&M University-Commerce website, and the State Higher Education policy.

The On-Site Reaffirmation Committee reviewed policies and guidelines from the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board and program descriptions in the Texas A&M University-Commerce undergraduate and graduate catalogs. The On-Site Reaffirmation Committee also interviewed faculty members of the University Studies Council and the Dean of University Studies in support of the institution's case for compliance, and affirms the findings of the Off-Site Reaffirmation Committee.

*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)**

Texas A&M University-Commerce 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.

The On-Site Reaffirmation Committee reviewed documents (list of posted resources, and the formal policies and procedures outlined in the Student Guidebook-Student Rights, and on the University website, Judicial Affairs/Student Concerns website, One Stop Shop (WeCare) website, and the Dean of Students' Office website) and conducted interviews (with the Dean of Students) in support of the institution's case for compliance and affirms the findings of the Off-Site Reaffirmation Committee. The evidence supports the finding that the campus makes a concerted effort to provide students with ready portals through which a variety of concerns or complaints can be presented for formal review. The online Complaint Resolution Matrix plainly identifies the specific issue, the appropriate procedure and process, and the individuals and/or offices that are responsible for providing assistance, as well as where complaint files are maintained. Students have ready access to this on-line resource and guide.

A more thorough and consistent process to review formal grade appeals at the Dean's level and Provost's level at the end of each semester was implemented in the Fall 2013 semester. Coupled with a very clear process for the submission of written complaints, there are strong indicators that the campus makes every effort to provide accessible and direct ways for issues to be identified and addressed. The WeCare survey appears to serve as a useful instrument to allow students to identify concerns informally or issues that can be directed to the appropriate office for a timely resolution. The monthly forums hosted by the Vice President of Student Access and Success to identify and address students' issues and concerns also appear to support a campus culture that fosters strong student connections and to establish ways to remove obstacles and provide clear pathways for students.

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

To ensure proper representation in promotional materials, the University has established a design process that ensures 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 demonstrates 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.

The On-Site Reaffirmation Committee reviewed documents (recruitment brochures, freshman and transfer flyers, Freshman Start Guide) in support of the institution's case for compliance and affirms the findings of the Off-Site Reaffirmation Committee. The University presents a sophisticated and cohesive set of recruitment materials to reflect the institution's mission accurately and to align recruitment strategies with the practices and policies of the University. Documentation is provided to indicate that the full set of recruitment material is reviewed by the appropriate staff and faculty members, which results in a consistent, genuine message, and design theme for prospective student audiences. Graduate recruitment is primarily performed by graduate faculty members, and on-line recruitment information provides specific information for prospective domestic and international graduate students.

*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)**

Texas A&M University-Commerce 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 rates for the University are lower than the average for other Texas institutions (11.5%) during this same time period.

Texas A&M University-Commerce's financial aid programs are audited as required by Federal and State regulations and Texas A&M University 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.

Texas A&M University-Commerce 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.

The On-Site Reaffirmation Committee reviewed the Final Audit Determination issued by Federal Student Aid, an office of the United States Department of Education, and affirms the findings of the Off-Site Reaffirmation Committee.

*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.

   The institution has login password protection for all distance learning students 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.

   The On-Site Reaffirmation Committee reviewed the information provided by the institution on the Center for IT Excellence website and affirms the findings of the Off-Site Reaffirmation Committee.

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

   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 Texas A&M University-Commerce 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.

   The On-Site Reaffirmation Committee reviewed the information provided by the institution on the Center for IT Excellence website and affirms the findings of the Off-Site Reaffirmation Committee.

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.

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.

The On-Site Reaffirmation Committee reviewed the information provided by the institution on the Center for IT Excellence website and affirms the findings of the Off-Site Reaffirmation Committee.

*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)**

Texas A&M University-Commerce adheres to federal, State, Texas A&M University System, and Texas A&M University-Commerce 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 levels illustrates that Texas A&M University-Commerce has sound procedures and follows them in defining credit hours.

The On-Site Reaffirmation Committee reviewed minutes of the Faculty Senate Curriculum Committee, policies and procedures within the New Program and Curriculum Approval Process (Policy 03.02.99.R0.01), (including documentation relating to its resident and distance sites), and conducted interviews at the main campus, the Universities Center at Dallas, and the Collins Higher Education Center at McKinney in support of the institution's case for compliance. The On-Site Reaffirmation Committee affirms the findings of the Off-Site Reaffirmation Committee.

To be completed by the On-Site Reaffirmation Committee.

A. Brief description of the institution's Quality Enhancement Plan

Preparing Students for an Interconnected World proposes to develop two new programs that will significantly enhance the global competence of Texas A&M University-Commerce students. The Global Scholar Program provides global learning courses and experiences for all first-year students, as well as the opportunity to apply for Global Scholar status by completing additional further global learning activities during their studies. The Global Fellow Program invites faculty and staff to apply for Global Fellow status in recognition of their accomplishments in pursuing global courses, activities, research, and professional development. Global Scholars may also apply for new, dedicated study abroad scholarships, while Global Fellows may apply for new, dedicated seed grants in support of their international work. Both Scholars and Fellows will also maintain ePortfolios to document and reflect upon their work, and the progress of all students will be evaluated by administering the Global Competence Aptitude Assessment both when they enter and when they graduate.

Together, these two programs are intended to promulgate new global learning outcomes for Texas A&M University-Commerce and build the curricular, co-curricular, and human resources needed to achieve these outcomes. Both programs will build upward from a range of existing, but largely disconnected, global learning efforts. Texas A&M University-Commerce is committing a budget of $2 million over five years and proposing a QEP Director, standing committee, and departmental mentors to carry out these programs in collaboration with existing campus entities, such as the Office of International Studies.

B. Analysis of the Acceptability of the Quality Enhancement Plan

1.   ***An Institutional Process***. *The institution uses an institutional process for identifying key issues emerging from institutional assessment.*

The QEP reflects issues emerging from several institutional processes and assessments. The perceived need for greater efforts in global learning surfaced in the focus groups, survey results, and interviews that ultimately chose and refined this topic for the QEP. There was strong feeling that Texas A&M University-Commerce was not doing all it could in this area of increasing importance for all its graduates. This perception was validated when the Global Competence Aptitude Assessment was administered to roughly 500 Texas A&M University-Commerce students with resulting scores that were significantly below the standard GCAA thresholds for global competence. In addition, analysis of student responses to the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) revealed that Texas A&M University-Commerce lags behind high-performing peer institutions in terms of Enriching Educational Experiences related to global learning. This finding was further confirmed by recent senior exit interviews showing that fewer than half of Texas A&M University-Commerce students participate in co-curricular activities, and by a series of focus groups and interviews that confirmed low

participation in global activities. Another survey revealed that 75% of faculty and staff have not engaged in global work of any sort.

2. ***Focus of the Plan***. *The institution identifies a significant issue that (1) focuses on learning outcomes and/or the environment supporting student learning and (2) accomplishes the mission of the institution.*

    The three Student Learning Outcomes selected by Texas A&M University-Commerce fully support the overarching objective of improving students' global competence. The proposed primary vehicles through which this objective will be achieved are a) the Global Scholar Program (for students) and b) the Global Fellow Program (for faculty and staff). Both programs are designed to create an environment that fosters and fully supports student learning through the objectives identified in the University's strategic plan and mission statement.

    Through research and analysis, the QEP Committee observed a gap between students' readiness and the real demands of the workplace, in that 75% of employers insist that students must be better prepared for the rigors of a global economy. Through the administration of the Global Competence Aptitude Assessment (GCAA) to selected students in the Summer and Fall of 2013 (N=497) and a follow-up perception survey with this group, the Committee discovered that students who traveled across continents and/or spent longer periods abroad scored higher on every measure of global competence than their peers who did not travel. The survey results also indicated that students with greater world language exposure scored higher in all dimensions of global competence than those students with none or limited language exposure. The results of the GCAA and the student perception survey helped shape the design of the Global Scholar Program and identified clear pathways to improve students' global competence.

    In concert with the University mission to "discover and disseminate knowledge for leadership and service in an interconnected dynamic world," the QEP Committee selected goals that are fully integrated with the University strategic plan and designed SLOs that support these goals. The three student learning outcomes are tightly woven into the QEP Plan to provide an intentional focus, to outline measurable benchmarks, and to guide the direction and shape of the Global Scholar Program in a comprehensive effort to achieve the stated objective of improving students' global competence. The proposed direct and indirect assessment models appear well designed to provide clear and ongoing measurement and feedback to identify any program adjustments needed as the QEP matures and develops.

    The design and structure of the proposed Global Fellow Program provides a robust and innovative platform for direct faculty and staff participation in the implementation of the QEP across the campus. This component of the QEP should attract active and engaged collaboration and partnerships with faculty and staff colleagues, and holds great potential to enhance the campus environment in strong support of student learning and accomplishing the mission of Texas A&M University-Commerce.

3.   ***Institutional Capability for the Initiation, Implementation, and Completion of the Plan***. *The institution provides evidence that it has sufficient resources to initiate, implement, sustain, and complete the QEP.*

Texas A&M University-Commerce has done a thorough job of identifying the resources—curricular, co-curricular, financial, organizational, and human—needed to initiate, implement, and complete the QEP. Existing resources such as global courses, global co-curricular activities, and study abroad programs, have been identified and included in the QEP. A new global learning course requirement has already been established, and the assessment instruments that will be used to determine achievement of learning outcomes associated with global competence have been piloted. An institution-wide QEP Committee has been at work for some time, and a QEP Director and support staff will be appointed. Texas A&M University-Commerce is also committing $2 million over five years in re-allocated funds to support the operational costs of implementing the QEP, as well as the new study abroad scholarships and faculty/staff fellowships that are key elements of the plan. The Faculty Center for Teaching with Technology offers extensive faculty development in instructional design to meet the goals identified by faculty for their courses. Units such as the Office of International Studies are already operational and will be enhanced to meet the increased expectations related to implementing the QEP.

4.   ***Broad-based Involvement of Institutional Constituencies***. *The institution demonstrates the involvement of its constituencies in the development and proposed implementation of the Plan.*

Development of the QEP
The information provided indicates that the QEP Leadership Team at Texas A&M University-Commerce crafted and implemented a very thorough and deliberate process with the creation and selection of *Preparing Students for an Interconnected World* as the Quality Enhancement Plan for the campus community. Starting in 2008, the QEP Committee created focus groups, campus-wide surveys, research projects, and personal interviews to gather ideas and direction for the QEP topic. Direct input on the development of the QEP topic was gathered from a broad range of students (undergraduate, master's, and doctoral students), faculty and staff members, off-campus personnel, alumni, and members of the upper administration. Through open-ended questions in an initial survey, four broad QEP topics were identified: critical thinking, communication, cultural/global awareness, and work-life skills.

A second campus-wide survey was administered during the Spring semester 2009 to refine the selection of the QEP topic further. The results of the survey, including a close review of the open-ended comments, were formally assessed by Texas A&M University-Commerce's President and the President's Advisory Council. This review resulted in the identification of cultural/global awareness as the QEP topic that offered the greatest potential to include elements of the four topics that were initially identified across the campus; aligned closely with the institution's strategic plan, mission, and guiding principles; and presented a distinctive QEP topic for the university.

The results of a third survey administered during the Summer and Fall of 2009 identified four core components (global scholarship, knowledge/awareness, fluency, and engagement) that were fundamental to ongoing planning conversations from 2010-2012 as the QEP Committee sought to define the focus of the QEP topic. Intensive discussions and ongoing work with student learning outcomes led to a more focused QEP goal to improve students' global competence, which in Spring 2013 led to the QEP Committee recommending to the Leadership Team and the President's Advisory Council that *Preparing Students for an Interconnected World* would stand as the campus QEP. This recommendation was officially approved and adopted, and additional work was completed to refine the tasks and structure of the model and the student learning outcomes.

Implementation of the QEP

The QEP Leadership Team and the campus administration have proposed a QEP implementation strategy that is broad-based and deep. The implementation plan is solidly constructed upon the institution's strategic plan, mission statement, and guiding principles, and the plan outlines a clear path by which the stated QEP goals and student learning outcomes can be achieved in a comprehensive and engaged manner. The creation of the Global Scholars and the Global Fellows Programs strengthens the focus of the efforts to infuse the QEP into the formal classroom and instruction settings as well as into the informal and co-curricular experiences for students. The QEP engages faculty and staff members directly in the creation and fostering of an environment and campus culture that fully embraces and supports the design and implementation of the QEP.

The proposed direct and indirect measures of assessment of the QEP objective and student learning align well with the implementation plan, and the stated student learning outcomes provide creative and innovative avenues by which student learning can be enhanced and strengthened. The plan also contains the flexibility with which to adapt as needed if the student learning outcomes or other measures of assessment indicate any readjustments should be considered to maintain the focus and impact of the QEP on student learning and faculty and staff engagement.

The steps and timeline proposed for each phase of the QEP implementation plan appear to be congruent, and the identified resource allocation and level of commitment from the University administration are in alignment with the outline of the proposed plan.

5. ***Assessment of the Plan***. *The institution identifies goals and a plan to assess the achievement of those goals.*

The QEP sets forth three clearly stated goals: greater global competence for students, greater student participation in global learning, and effective leveraging of the human, physical, and financial resources allocated to the QEP. The first two goals lead to three student learning outcomes: knowledge of global interconnectedness and dynamics, ability to apply this knowledge, and development of a personal sense of global citizenship. These goals and outcomes will be assessed in multiple ways, including

standardized survey instruments (GCAA, NSSE); ePortfolios; global course artifacts; new questions on course evaluations; institution's success in meeting the target numbers for Global Scholars, Study Abroad, and participation in global events on campus; senior exit surveys; and placement rates after graduation.

C.   Analysis and Comments for Strengthening the QEP

- The QEP has a clear, sharp focus on two well-defined strategies to achieve important student global learning outcomes, strategies that are simultaneously achievable, significant, and innovative.
- The plan flows directly from multiple, inclusive conversations across the length and breadth of the institution in a process of cross-disciplinary dialogue and discovery that yielded interesting, new, collaboratively derived goals, strategies, and understandings.
- Emphasis on global learning for all students, regardless of discipline, is bold and fully appropriate for the range of colleges and disciplines at Texas A&M University-Commerce.
- Asking all colleges and disciplines to take ownership and interpret the overarching global learning goals will ensure the spread of global learning across the institution.
- Focus on global dynamics and interconnectedness is distinctive and energizing, provides an umbrella for all disciplines, and reflects a very sophisticated understanding of what global learning is about.
- Including various experiential forms of global learning – both curricular and co-curricular – adds an important dimension to the QEP.
- Placing key QEP activities in the required Freshman Success Class and requiring all first-year students to undertake some of these activities signals the centrality of global learning to Texas A&M University-Commerce and should increase the spread of global learning across the institution.
- The QEP will achieve important goals in and of itself, but has also been constructed to set the stage for further international activities in the future.
- The plan is widely understood and endorsed as an important "culture change" for Texas A&M University-Commerce.
- Rather than proposing a host of new activities, the QEP makes greater use of existing ones— by requiring some, encouraging all, and developing strategies to draw greater participation by students, faculty and staff.
- Detailed, survey-based research on the impact of Texas A&M University-Commerce's existing international activities was conducted to assess the extent to which these can accomplish the QEP's goals (with a positive determination that they can).
- The plan flows directly from Texas A&M University-Commerce's stated mission, Strategic Plan, and what have been established as the international needs of the students and region it serves.
- The QEP is widely known and endorsed across the institution, with large numbers of students, faculty, staff, and the administration able to speak at length about its goals and strategies.
- These new global learning activities will also enhance other aspects of student learning at Texas A&M University-Commerce, such as student engagement.
- Planning is at an advanced stage of development; the QEP is ready to be implemented once it is approved.
- A variety of institutional assessments are used to explore and validate the need for the QEP.

- The plan uses well-chosen standardized instruments to create baseline, comparative knowledge of where Texas A&M University-Commerce students and faculty are in terms of global learning.
- A decision was made to use ePortfolios not only for program assessment, but also for sparking reflection, deepening learning, and serving as a reference for students even after they graduate.
- The institution has already done piloted GCAA administration and ePortfolio development in preparation for full-scale implementation of the QEP.
- The institution has set up an organizational structure that pulls together key University constituencies, builds cross-disciplinary synergies, and will ensure sustained involvement over time.
- The institution has committed funding that is sufficient for the work outlined.
- The institution will appoint a Director to insure the QEP moves forward.

Challenges for the Successful Implementation of the QEP

- Supporting and assessing ePortfolios is a complex, labor-intensive process.
- Careful, sustained mentorship will be needed to ensure that Global Scholar students develop sets of activities that are coherent and deep, and will lead them toward achieving all three global learning outcomes identified in the QEP.
- Encouraging students to apply for Global Scholar status requires many individuals to be involved, from advisors to marketing and communications to the QEP office. It may take several years before there are significant numbers enrolled.
- The requirement that Global Scholars need only take one global learning course may be too low to ensure that students meet the three global learning outcomes; students must be advised of this possibility and strongly encouraged to do more.

Other Comments

- Consider establishing a Global Fellow Working Group that will be tasked with faculty development of other Global Fellows and the faculty, at large. This group should function as a "community of scholars" with a formal development plan. Suggested activities include Global Fellow workshops, Global Fellow Mentors, etc.
- Texas A&M University-Commerce's efforts at enhancing global competence might also benefit from focused attention on cultivating existing and new partnerships, with globally oriented organizations in the area and international institutions overseas. Such partnerships are very useful for expanding possibilities, filling gaps in what Texas A&M University-Commerce is able to offer, sharing resources, and creating global dialogues and experiences that can be a critical element in student learning. Collaborative on-line interactive teaching with colleagues at institutions overseas might be considered.
- Texas A&M University-Commerce might want to consider providing workshops and study/travel programs as a means of faculty development, especially for faculty who are just venturing into international work.
- The increasing international diversity of the undergraduate student body might be used as a source of global learning—both within the classroom and beyond.

Part IV. Third-Party Comments

To be completed by the On-Site Reaffirmation Committee.

If an institution receives Third-Party Comments, the institution has an opportunity to respond to those comments and the On-Site Reaffirmation Committee reviews the response as part of its comprehensive evaluation of the institution.

Yes   Third-Party Comments submitted. *(Address the items below.)*

A Third-Party Comment was submitted to SACSCOC from a former faculty member of Texas A&M University-Commerce. The On-Site Reaffirmation Committee reviewed the Third-Party Comment and its supporting documentation, and the University's response to the Third-Party Comment. The Committee interviewed the institution's President.

The Committee noted that the complainant's submission did not follow the format stipulated in SACSCOC policy statement, Third-Party Comment by the Public, nor did the submission identify or describe the institution's performance in terms of compliance with the standards/requirements of the *Principles of Accreditation*. The Committee considered the comments to be unsupported and to lack substantive correlation to the institution's performance as it relates to the *Principles of Accreditation*.