Texas A&M University-Commerce

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Commerce, Texas 75428

First Monitoring Report

Revised

Fifth-Year Referral Report Warning

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On July 8, 2011, Dr. Dan Jones, president of Texas A&M University-Commerce (A&M-Commerce), received a letter from Dr. Belle Wheelan stating that the Commission on Colleges reviewed a Referral Report and placed A&M-Commerce on Warning for six months for failure to demonstrate compliance with Core Requirement 2.8 (Faculty) of the *Principles of Accreditation*. The Committee did not authorize a Special Committee Visit. The institution is requested to submit a First Monitoring Report to the Commission on Colleges due September 7, 2011, addressing the following referenced standard of the *Principles*:

**CR 2.8 (Faculty)**

In an earlier response to the Commission involving the adequacy of full-time faculty, the institution listed several characteristics and features relating to full-time faculty such as comparisons to peer institutions, distribution of full-time/part-time faculty by teaching discipline, as well as student/faculty ratios. In addition to the characteristics and features, there was no discussion concerning faculty workload issues or a more comprehensive review of the role that full-time faculty members play in supporting the institution’s mission. The institution is asked to demonstrate that the number of full-time faculty is adequate to support its mission and ensure the quality and integrity of the institution’s academic offerings.

**Brief History of Prior Response to Fifth Year-Report (Referral Report)**

Texas A&M University-Commerce submitted its initial Fifth-Year Interim Report in March 2010. In a letter dated July 15, 2010, Dr. Belle Wheelan notified Dr. Dan Jones that “because of significant deficiencies in complying with the (14 select) standards, our institution is
advised to take immediate steps to come into compliance and is requested to submit a Referral Report to the Commission on Colleges due April 15, 2011.” The university was cited as being deficient in four areas: CR 2.8 (Faculty), CS 3.3.1.1 (Institutional Effectiveness: Educational Programs), CS 3.4.11 (Academic Program Coordination), and FR 4.5 (Student Complaints). The university prepared and submitted its Referral Report to the Commission in April 2011. After reviewing the Report, the Commission cleared all but one deficiency, with CR2.8 Faculty cited as still being deficient.

The Referral Report was based on fall 2010 statistics and data. As was stated by the review committee, the Referral Report listed several characteristics and features relating to full-time faculty such as comparisons to peer institutions, distribution of full-time/part-time faculty by teaching discipline, as well as student/faculty ratios and average class sizes. It also included information to support the use of part-time faculty (adjuncts and graduate teaching assistants). Additionally, the report provided the rationale for several programs using higher than average numbers of part-time faculty. As mentioned above, the institution is asked to demonstrate that the number of full-time faculty is adequate to support its mission and ensure the quality and integrity of the institution’s academic offerings by discussing faculty workload issues and the role that full-time faculty members play in supporting the institution’s mission.
Institutional Response

The number of full-time faculty members (at Texas A&M University-Commerce) is adequate to support the mission of the institution and ensure the quality and integrity of its academic programs. The institutional mission states that:

Texas A&M University-Commerce provides a personal educational experience for a diverse community of life-long learners. Our purpose is to discover and disseminate knowledge for leadership and service in an interconnected and dynamic world. Our challenge is to nurture partnerships for the intellectual, cultural, social, and economic vitality of Texas and beyond. [Mission Statement, 1]

Connected to the university mission are seven guiding principles. [2, p. 2] These principles (diversity, service, student success, stewardship, globalization, research, and communication) are intended to assist faculty in focusing their actions toward the mission.

Statistical Data

Various statistical measures can be reviewed in determining an institution’s ability to ensure the quality and integrity of its academic programs. The data provided in this paragraph are from three sources: The Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB); the A&M-Commerce Office of Planning, Institutional Effectiveness, and Research; and the university’s Technology Services Office. A breakdown is provided of the number of university’s faculty by
full-time and part-time status [3] and the number of semester credit hours taught by full- and part-time faculty [4], for fall semesters from 2006-2010. Both are certified data from THECB reports. According to the data, the full-time faculty has increased from 307 in 2006 to 327 in 2010, an increase of 6.5%. During this five-year period, the percent of semester credit hours taught by full-time faculty decreased slightly (-3.7%). This decline is due, at least in part, to the need to hire part-time faculty (adjuncts) because of two factors. First, during FY11, the university had a higher than normal number of full-time position vacancies. Second, an increased number of class sections were needed to accommodate an unprecedented increase in student enrollment in fall 2010. Even so, the percentage of semester credit hours taught by full-time faculty in fall 2010 remained high (71.5%). [4]

A comparison of fall 2010 credit-generating course sections taught by full-time and part-time faculty by college and by department was another method used to document sufficient faculty. The comparison is presented in a table that follows. [5] The percentage of all class sections for academic programs, university’s freshman success/critical thinking, and honors colloquium taught by full-time faculty (FT%; yellow column) ranges from 40% to 100%. When the non-program sections (blue column) are excluded, the lower end of the range of full-time faculty (FT%) increases to 47.08%. When comparing the overall averages of the two groups, the percentage increased from 68.27% for all sections to 69.66% for the selected sections excluded. In fall 2010, all sections in the Department of Engineering and Technology were taught by full-time faculty. The percentage of courses taught by full-time faculty in the Department of Curriculum and Instruction and Department of Literature and Languages are addressed later in this report.
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68.27 69.66

Prepared by the A&M-Commerce's Office of Technology Services using campus BANNER data from campus reports.
In the fall 2010 semester, the university had a full-time equivalent of 344 faculty members. Using official THECB data, of the FTE teaching faculty, 55.8% were either tenured or on tenure-track. The university had a full-time student equivalent of 6,988 yielding a student to faculty ratio of 20:1, a ratio which compares favorably to other state universities in Texas. The range of student to faculty ratios for all Texas universities is from 13:1 to 29:1. This places our university just slightly over the average. A 20:1 student faculty ratio supports an important part of our institutional mission to provide “a personal educational experience …”.

Full-Time – Part-Time Faculty

The proportion of full-time faculty to part-time faculty is often determined by the discipline and the delivery of a program, as well as the student/faculty ratio, specific requirements of professional fields, and the level of instruction. The examples below address circumstances associated with those two departments in which the percentage of instruction delivered by full-time faculty members is below 50%.

- Of the academic departments, the Department of Curriculum and Instruction has the lowest percentage of credit-generating sections taught by full-time faculty. Its coverage of 47.08% is mostly due to the delivery of the student teaching program, which is a field-based model that maintains as closely as possible a 5:1 student to supervisor ratio during the student teaching semester(s). In fall 2010, the department offered a total of 28 sections of field-based student-teaching courses. As depicted in the associated table, when sections taught by part-time faculty are extracted from the section count, the percentage of sections taught by full-time faculty increases to 50.3%.
The field-based program for interdisciplinary studies (elementary and middle school) requires two semesters of student teaching (one semester of internship; one semester of residency). This impacts the percentage of full-time faculty as a majority of the year-long student teaching course sections are taught by part-time adjuncts in the public school setting. The department head works diligently to hire only highly qualified adjuncts as supervisors and the majority of these supervisors are retired classroom teachers who offer a considerable amount of knowledge and experience that is beneficial to the interns and residents.

The smaller enrollment numbers in the supervision sections are necessary as university faculty (liaisons) visit, observe, and conference with both the students and mentor teachers in these sections on a weekly or bi-weekly basis. This intensive support allows for timely feedback to our education students as they are applying pedagogical knowledge and developing their teaching skills. The time is also used to build and maintain collaborative partnerships with public schools, which allows faculty members to satisfy partner schools’ needs for professional development and to conduct responsive research. These partnerships are very beneficial to our interns and residents, as these districts then hire our students. These teachers in turn, are an important part of this pipeline for our graduate programs. Our teacher education program is highly respected, not only in northeast Texas, but across the state.

- The Department of Literature and Languages is the other department in which the percentage of full-time faculty members teaching credit-generating sections taught by full-time faculty falls below 50%. [5] Two factors contribute to this lower percentage of sections taught by full-time faculty. One factor is that the department has a growing
doctoral program in English. As is common among English doctoral programs, the graduate students (master’s and doctoral), with 18 or more graduate hours in English, can apply for a graduate assistantship teaching (GAT). Students selected to be a GAT are the teacher of record for the freshman English composition classes and for writing labs required alongside these courses. In fall 2010, doctoral students were teachers of record for 33 sections. All graduate assistants are trained, supervised, evaluated, and mentored by full-time faculty. Their teaching experience is an integral component of these students’ professional development and contributes to the 100% placement rate of doctoral graduates.

The second factor is those doctoral faculty members who regularly publish scholarly work and obtain grants have a three course load each term, as was recommended in the department’s most recent graduate program review, conducted by one A&M-Commerce faculty member and two faculty members from other doctoral-granting institutions in Texas. The load was approved by the dean of College of Arts and Sciences, the dean of The Graduate Studies, and the provost as part of the university’s goal of supporting selected programs to achieve national recognition. The Department of Literature and Languages is in the process of applying for the Conference on College Composition and Communication’s Certificate for Writing.

Full-time and part-time faculty members are also discussed in the Faculty Roles and Responsibilities section later in this report. In that section, full-time and part-time faculty members are addressed from the off-site location perspective.
Faculty Classifications and Hiring Practices

According to the Texas A&M University-Commerce Procedure 01.03.99.R0.01 Faculty Appointments [10], the university employs tenured, tenure-track, and non-tenure-track faculty. Non-tenure-track appointments can be designated as one of the following: 1) non-tenure-track (full-time); 2) ad interim appointment (one year term appointment); 3) part-time appointment; and 4) adjunct appointment. A&M-Commerce Procedure 01.03.99.R0.03 Adjunct and Part-Time Faculty Appointments [11, #3.] addresses the qualifications of adjunct and part-time faculty, stating that the credentials of these teachers must be consistent with those of full-time faculty. For example, they should hold a minimum of a master's degree and should have completed a minimum of 18 graduate hours in the subject field to be taught. They must meet the same requirements for professional, experiential, and scholarly preparation as their full-time counterparts teaching in the same discipline. Exceptional and unusual cases must be justified in advance of hiring. Part-time teachers are held to the same evaluation standards as full-time faculty and are evaluated according to the same procedures as apply to full-time faculty.

Faculty Roles and Responsibilities

The Academic Freedom, Tenure, Promotion and Post Tenure Review Procedure 12.01.99.R0.01 (abbreviated) [12] states that A&M-Commerce recognizes and appreciates the diversity of faculty roles and responsibilities within the university. This diversity adds richness and depth to the educational programs of the university and the support that the university provides to the region, state and nation. According to The Texas A&M System Policy 12.03 Faculty Academic Workload and Reporting Requirements [13, 1.2], faculty members in all System institutions are expected to engage in those commonly accepted duties which will
enhance the teaching/learning process and the quality of the academic programs. The System workload policy further states that recognized duties include classroom teaching, scholarly study, basic and applied research, professional development, student advising and counseling, course and curriculum development, continuing education, public service, assistance in the administration of the academic program, and similar academic activities. All of these activities/roles and responsibilities support not only the university mission, but the guiding principles as well, especially in terms of “fostering the development of a diverse community of life-long learners” who will be prepared “to discover and disseminate knowledge for leadership and service in an interconnected and dynamic world.” These duties are fundamental to the life and work of a faculty member at A&M-Commerce, and are taken into account in consideration for promotion, tenure, and salary.

Workload assignments at A&M-Commerce are in line with Coordinating Board Faculty Workload Policy Guidelines for Texas Public Universities [14], The A&M System workload policy [13], and the A&M-Commerce workload procedure [15]. The Texas A&M University-Commerce workload procedure establishes a normal workload for its full-time faculty at 12 semester credit hours each fall and spring term when teaching any combination of undergraduate and graduate classes or 9 semester credit hours per fall and spring term when teaching only graduate classes. Four courses (12-14 semester credit hours) over the two summer terms are considered a full load.

According to the A&M-Commerce workload procedure [15, 3.], the primary duty of faculty is to teach. However, the procedure states that research and/or developmental activities are expected and an indispensable part of the regular workload of all permanent faculty members. Therefore, faculty members can request workload equivalencies, as specified in the
Coordinating Board Faculty Workload Policy Guidelines [14, 3.], which are acceptable for fulfillment of workload requirements. These professional activities, including research and creative activities, must directly relate to the teaching function and must be accounted for in computing a valid institutional workload profile. In defining instructional activities which are acceptable for fulfillment of workload requirements, the Coordinating Board identifies four appointment codes (for workload equivalencies) for activities that can be funded from faculty salaries. These functions and situations are categorized in terms of semester hour equivalents under the following principal headings: direct instructional activities (Code 1), administrative assignments (Code 02), any other professional assignments directly related to the teaching function (Code 03), and a faculty exchange with another institution (Code 04) (seldom used at A&M-Commerce). The appointment code for other professional assignments, in particular, supports the part of the university’s mission “to discover and disseminate knowledge,” in that it includes research and creative activities.

As a regional institution of higher education, some Texas A&M University faculty members have teaching responsibilities at our off-site locations. Classes are taught at both the undergraduate and graduate levels. During fall 2010, the FTE faculty members teaching at one or more of our six off-site locations were 81.25 [16]. The off-site locations included: Universities Center at Dallas, Navarro College (Corsicana), Midlothian Campus of the Navarro College, Mesquite Metroplex Center, Rockwall Education Center, and Colin Higher Education Center (McKinney). If you look at the schedule of classes that is posted on the Texas A&M University-Commerce web site, you will see two other sites, i.e., Eastfield College (Mesquite) and Northeast Texas Community College (Pittsburg). However, no classes were taught at those locations during fall 2010.
According to data presented in the Fall 2010 Distance Education Faculty Table [16], the College of Business and College of Education and Human Services had the majority of the distance education faculty. The reason for this is that these two colleges offer the majority of our programs available at the off-site locations. When comparing the number of full-time to part-time faculty/FTE in the College of Business, one will see that full-time FTE was 22.25 (68%) compared to 11.9 FTE (31.8%) part-time. In the near future, this full-time faculty will increase even more as the college has been approved for five new lines [17, page 2] in the current budget, with a good possibility for additional lines being approved. When comparing the number of full-time to part-time faculty in the College of Education and Human Services, one will see that distance education classes taught by full-time faculty was significantly higher than the part-time instructors (FT=20.8 FTE to PT=9.0 FTE). The explanation for the one prefix with no full-time faculty is that the full-time faculty member was on leave of absence for medical reasons, and subsequently passed away. In the College of Humanities, Social Sciences, and Arts, almost 70% of the distance education faculty members (8.50 FTE of the total of 12.35 FTE) were full-time. The College of Science, Engineering and Agriculture had the highest number of distance education classes taught by part-time faculty (slightly over 70%). Two factors contributed to this over-all low number of full-time FTE. One factor is that the courses are primarily support courses for majors in the other colleges; some of the courses are required general education courses. This is the case with the three prefixes with no full time FTE. The second factor is the overall low number of classes in the college taught at the off-site locations.

As stated in the section on faculty classification and hiring practices, the credentials of part-time faculty must be consistent with those of full-time faculty. In all cases, the credentials and qualifications of part-time faculty are very strong.
Another traditional function within the role and responsibility of a faculty member at some universities is student advising. A&M-Commerce utilizes a professional model for all undergraduate advising. Success coaches in the Division of Student Access and Success advise undergraduates until they complete their general studies core. Once the core is complete, students are advised at his or her college’s Advising Center which is staffed by professional advisors. Under this model, the faculty members’ role in advising is more aligned with providing majors with career guidance. As a university with both master’s and doctoral degrees, faculty members advise and mentor all graduate students. This expectation of graduate faculty is part of the normal load and part of the reason for the three course load per term.

The department chair, subject to approval of the college dean and provost, determines a faculty member’s assigned time for professional activities during the semester. When approving a request for a workload adjustment, the department chair should take into consideration the needs of the department and the university along with the individual professional goals of each faculty member. The provost is responsible for implementing the institution’s workload policy, and making certain that institutional regulations are being followed.

**Faculty Evaluation**

All faculty (tenure-track or non-tenure-track [18, 2]; full-time [19, 1.] or part-time, [13, 7.]) undergo a performance evaluation that is based on their roles and responsibilities. An Annual Faculty Evaluation is required of all full-time faculty members. [19] When appropriate, reviews are performed in tenure, promotion, and post-tenure cycles. [12] For each type of performance evaluation, three university-wide criteria are used for evaluation, i.e., 1) teaching, 2) research or other scholarly and creative activities, and 3) service (to the profession, the university, and the
community). Additionally, departments establish criteria that are comprehensive and consistent with the general framework of the university-wide criteria [19, 1.b.]. The annual faculty evaluation process has two major goals: to provide (1) a system to facilitate the development of teaching, research or other scholarly and creative activities (RSCA), and service to the university, profession, and community; and (2) an annual evaluation (review of performance) of teaching, RSCA, and service for the purpose of making decisions regarding the terms and conditions of the employment relationship between the faculty and the university, including merit pay, promotion, tenure, and post-tenure review. As stated above, the research or other scholarly activities, as well as creative activities, supports that part of the university’s mission “to discover and disseminate knowledge.”
Conclusion

Texas A&M University-Commerce demonstrates that the number of full-time faculty is adequate to support its mission and ensure the quality and integrity of the institution’s academic offerings.
# Actions Taken

Over the past five years, Texas A&M University-Commerce has experienced unprecedented enrollment growth. According to THECB certified data, headcount enrollment has increased almost 21%. One college in particular that is experiencing significant growth is the College of Business (COB). In order to accommodate this growth, both at the university level and in programs in the COB, and to make certain the university maintains an adequate number of full-time faculty members to support its mission and ensure the quality and integrity of the institution’s academic offerings, the following actions have been taken:

1. The president has made a financial commitment to provide twelve (12) new full-time faculty lines in the FY12 budget.

2. In addition to the financial commitment made by the president, the College of Business has committed to utilize funding generated from new fee revenues to fund four (4) new faculty lines in its college.

3. As a result of decisions made by The Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board, the university was notified recently of the actions taken on our low-producing programs. A number of programs are to be consolidated while a few programs will be phased out. Since there will be no resulting terminations, these actions will allow the various departments to modify faculty assignments to support other programs.

4. In past years, a number of faculty lines have gone vacant for one or more years, thus resulting in the need to hire part-time faculty. The academic deans have indicated each will
work with departments having vacancies to make a concerted effort to fill every open position by fall 2012 with a full-time faculty member.
1. **Mission Statement**, Strategic Plan, 2011-2015, Texas A&M University-Commerce

2. **Our Guiding Principles**, Strategic Plan, 2011-2015, Texas A&M University-Commerce,

3. **Number of Faculty by Status and Year**, Fall Semesters 2006 – 2010. Data Provided by Texas A&M University-Commerce, Office of Institutional Research from Certified THECB Reports, CBM004 and CBM008.

4. **Number of Semester Credit Hours Taught by Full-time and Part-time Faculty** – Fall Semester 2006-2010. Data Provided by Texas A&M University-Commerce, Office of Institutional Research from Certified THECB Reports, CBM004 and CBM008.

5. **Credit Generating Course Sections taught by Full-time and Part-time Faculty by College and Department**, Fall Semester 2010

6. **Full-Time Equivalent Faculty** (FTEF), #35, Texas A&M University-Commerce Accountability Report, The Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board, February 2011
   [http://www.txhighereddata.org/Interactive/Accountability/](http://www.txhighereddata.org/Interactive/Accountability/)

   [http://www.txhighereddata.org/Interactive/Accountability/](http://www.txhighereddata.org/Interactive/Accountability/)

8. **Student/Faculty Ratio**, #35, Texas A&M University-Commerce Accountability Report, The Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board, February 2011
   [http://www.txhighereddata.org/Interactive/Accountability/](http://www.txhighereddata.org/Interactive/Accountability/)

9. **Student-Faculty Ratio for Past Eleven Years for All State Universities**, Texas A&M University-Commerce Accountability Report, The Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board, February 2011
   [http://www.txhighereddata.org/Interactive/Accountability/](http://www.txhighereddata.org/Interactive/Accountability/)

10. Texas A&M University-Commerce Procedure 01.03.99.R0.01 Faculty Appointments

11. Texas A&M University-Commerce Procedure 01.03.99.R0.03 Adjunct and Part-Time Faculty Appointment
12. Texas A&M University-Commerce Procedure 12.01.99.R0.01 Academic Freedom, Tenure, Promotion and Post Tenure Review
13. The Texas A&M System Policy 12.03 Faculty Academic Workload and Reporting Requirements
14. The Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board Faculty Workload Policy Guidelines for Texas Public Universities, Section 3, Updated fall 1992
15. Texas A&M University-Commerce Procedure 12.03.99.R0.01 Faculty Workload
16. Fall 2010 Distant Education Faculty, Office of Institutional Research
17. New Faculty Lines, Presidential and College of Business Commitment in FY12 Budget
18. Texas A&M University-Commerce Procedure 12.01.99.R0.06 Appointment, Reappointment, and Promotion of Non-Tenure-Track and Clinical Faculty
19. Texas A&M University-Commerce Procedure 12.01.99.R.02 Annual Faculty Evaluation
20. Total Enrollment by Level, Fall Semesters 2006 – 2010, Data are from THECB Profile Reports (PREP) and are Certified Data.
21. The Texas Higher Education Low Producing Program Review, August 2011