

# Tracking Cougar Curriculum



November 2012

## Texas General Education Core Objectives

- Critical Thinking
- Communication
- Empirical and Quantitative Skills
- Teamwork
- Personal Responsibility
- Social Responsibility

## Foundational Component Areas

(with credit hours)

- American History (6)
- Communication (6)
- Creative Arts (3)
- Government / Political Science (6)
- Language, Philosophy & Culture (3)
- Life and Physical Sciences (6)
- Mathematics (3)
- Social and Behavioral Sciences (3)
- Component Area Option [distributed across the components] (6)

## Do Collin College students develop critical thinking skills?

In the response to our Core Curriculum Report, submitted to THECB this fall, MacGregor Stephenson, Assistant Commissioner, said, "Of particular value is the use of the Collegiate Learning Assessment (CLA) model to facilitate evaluation of student learning and to guide faculty." Collin College is one of 200+ colleges annually participating in the CLA. Given a scenario, students complete a Performance Task, a problem solving exercise based on reading a variety of printed sources, interpreting, analyzing and applying the information extracted. Then the students complete an Analytic Writing Task, critiquing a decision or solution posed by someone else. These two tasks measure critical thinking skills involving Analytic Reasoning & Evaluation, Problem Solving, Writing Effectiveness and Writing Mechanics.

### Outcomes

In 2011-12 Collin College met the standard of being at or above the mean of all two-year CLA schools for Analytic Writing tasks but fell short for the Performance Task. Examining performance by CLA task type can serve as an initial diagnostic exercise. Collin students matched their peers at writing persuasive, analytic essays with a thesis maintained and supported by relevant examples from per-

sonal experience, pop culture and current events. Collin students also performed as well or above their peers when critiquing written arguments by identifying logical flaws or explaining how the logic flaws affect the conclusions. However, when asked to synthesize information from multiple sources, recognize conflicting evidence, weigh the credibility of the evidence, interpret data, tables and figures correctly, and develop sound conclusions based on all available evidence, Collin students did not perform as well as their peers. This opportunity for improvement is also apparent in the core course-level performance of Collin students where they are more successful applying qualitative data than quantitative data.

### Closing the Loop!

Professors across disciplines and departments can review class activities to see if there are more opportunities for students to engage in synthesis and evaluation tasks, the highest order in Bloom's taxonomy. Making students aware of these critical thinking skills paves the way for increased understanding and conscious use. Interestingly, Collin students have a mean score of 988 for entering academic ability (EAA), higher than the EAA average of 952 for students at all two-year

institutions who participate in the CLA. Our students have the capacity to learn higher order skills as well as their peers; we can make sure their Collin College experience provides plenty of opportunity to do so.

For information or to schedule a presentation about the CLA results, contact Kathleen Fenton at 972-985-3737 or [fenton@collin.edu](mailto:fenton@collin.edu).

## CAB ACTIONS for September 28, 2012

### Curricular Decisions

- ARTS 2316 and ARTS 2366 Removed Prerequisites

No Curricular Actions in October or November

Status update for Core Curriculum Review

- Deans are reviewing course submission materials

Full minutes are posted on the Curriculum Office's intranet site.