

# Tracking Cougar Curriculum



March 2018

## CORE CURRICULUM: MARKETABLE META-SKILLS

*By Abe Johnson, Vice President/Provost-Frisco Campus*

Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board describes the purpose of the core curriculum as ensuring “Texas undergraduate students enrolled in public institutions of higher education will develop the essential knowledge and skills they need in order to be successful in college, in a career, in their communities, and in life” (<http://www.theccb.state.tx.us/apps/tcc/>). The Collin College mission aligns with this purpose, stating that Collin College is a “student and community-centered institution committed to developing skills, strengthening character, and challenging the intellect”. At the center of making this happen is faculty who are intentionally instructing and assessing the six meta-skills: Critical Thinking, Communication Skills, Empirical and Quantitative Skills, Team Work, Social Responsibility, and Personal Responsibility. The next step for Collin College is to ensure that we are clearly measuring the student learning objectives.

There are several avenues through which we can keep attainment of these marketable meta-skills front and center. We must continue to convey a positive message regarding the core curriculum through active and intentional promotion. We must also provide feedback to students. This feedback helps students focus their next efforts. Awareness and intentionality connects the dots between what might otherwise be isolated instances of learning; it enables students to transfer the core meta-skills to other disciplines and life situations.

### 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 and Culture (3)
- Life & Physical Sciences (6)
- Mathematics (3)
- Social & Behavioral Sciences (3)
- Component Area Option [distributed across the components] (6)

## THE DNA OF MARKETABLE META-SKILLS

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As recently witnessed in the Winter Olympics, intentional focus on performance against standards is an effective means to move an individual’s performance from good to spectacular. At the institutional level, we must collect data to show how the faculty focus on these marketable meta-skills is paying off. Aligning the instructional activities with their measures and gathering frequent performance data helps to demonstrate the effectiveness of the various activities in producing student proficiency. Each individual has a part to play, but facilitating learning in a classroom is not an isolated role for a single individual. Nor is it a single discipline’s burden to impart core learning outcomes such as Communication Skills to our students in one sixteen-week course. Institutionally, faculty are challenged to examine their disciplinary course work and integrate these foundational skills, not because the course is a core course, but because it is a Collin College course. Think of the core outcomes not as a distraction or an add-on, but as the underpinning or the DNA of marketable meta-skills delivered through the practice of great teaching.