

VERNON COLLEGE

Vernon, TX and Wichita Falls, TX

FOCUSED REPORT

Prepared for the Commission on Colleges

Southern Association of Colleges and Schools

July 2008

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VERNON COLLEGE

FOCUSED REPORT

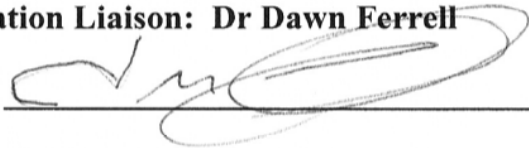
Vernon College is pleased to present our Focused Report in response to the preliminary Report of the Reaffirmation Committee from May 14, 2008 for the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges. This report provides updated or additional documentation regarding the institution's compliance with the Core Requirements and Comprehensive Standards identified by the Off-Site Committee during their review of our Compliance Certification.

By signing below, we attest to the following:

Vernon College has conducted an honest assessment of compliance and has provided complete and accurate disclosure of timely information in the following responses to the preliminary Report of the Reaffirmation Committee from May 14, 2008.

Accreditation Liaison: Dr Dawn Ferrell

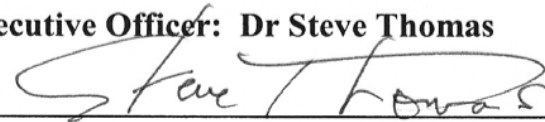
Signature



Date: July 28, 2008

Chief Executive Officer: Dr Steve Thomas

Signature



Date: July 28, 2008

VERNON COLLEGE FOCUSED REPORT

(In response to the preliminary Report of the Reaffirmation Committee)

The Vernon College Focused Report is presented below and is formatted in the following manner:

- Each Core Requirement/Comprehensive Standard (Non-Compliance)
- Vernon College's original narrative as contained in its Compliance Certification Report
- Off-Site Committee Comments (highlighted in yellow)
- Vernon College Response to the Off-Site Committee Comments (highlighted in blue)

Core Requirement 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 system wide 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. Audit requirements for applicant institutions may be found in Commission policy "Accreditation Procedures for Applicant Institutions." **(Financial Resources)**

COMPLIANCE

Narrative:

The institution has a sound and stable financial base as indicated by a number of measures. The institution has an [annual audit](#) conducted by an independent certified public accountant that reports directly to the Board of Trustees. The annual audit is conducted on all funds of the institution and includes a single audit of all financial aid programs. In terms of the annual operating budget, the three main sources of revenue are strong and stable to growing as reported in the independent audit for the year ended August 31, 2007 (see [Statistical Supplement 2](#)). Tuition and fees net of scholarship allowances and discounts have grown from \$1,322,519 in 2002 to \$2,198,299 in 2007. During the same period state appropriations were stable reporting \$6,845,150 in 2002 and in 2007 \$6,948,017. In 2007 local ad valorem tax receipts were \$2,036,614 and \$2,077,901 in 2002. The number of students attending the institution is increasing as well. Student headcount enrollment in credit programs have increased by 10.7% over the last five years (see [Statistical Supplement 15](#)).

The annual audit for the year ended August 31, 2007 also reported in [Statistical Supplement 2](#) that the operating and non-operating revenue increased from \$15,908,843 to \$18,293,384 respectively for years 2002 to 2007. Corresponding expenditures increased from \$14,878,026 in 2002 to \$17,858,035 in 2007, as reported in [Statistical Supplement 3](#). Sound budget planning preceded by strong strategic and annual planning has allowed the institution to grow the net assets, net of related debt, by 43.8% from 2002 to 2007 (\$5,090,355 to \$7,318,720) as reported in the annual audit for August 31, 2007 (see [Statistical Supplement 1](#)).

Documentation

1. [2007 Vernon College Annual Audit](#)
2. [Statistical Supplement 2, Revenue by Source](#)
3. [Statistical Supplement 15, Enrollment Details](#)
4. [Statistical Supplement 3, Program Expenses](#)
5. [Statistical Supplement 1, Net Assets by Component](#)

2.11.1

OFF-SITE COMMITTEE COMMENTS

Non-Compliance

VC provided documentation of an institutional audit for the most recent fiscal year and summarized analytical information on unrestricted net assets and affects of operations. The institution provided statistical supplements and a data driven financial statement audit that made financial stability quickly recognizable.

The College failed to address the annual budget or that it is preceded by sound planning and sound fiscal procedures. There is no indication that the governing board approves the budget or that the College has a budget planning process.

2.11.1

VERNON COLLEGE RESPONSE TO OFF-SITE COMMITTEE COMMENTS

Vernon College has a very sound budgetary process that is preceded by sound planning and fiscal procedures. The *Vernon College Policy and Procedures Manual* ([CC LEGAL](#)) and ([CC LOCAL](#)) specifies the process for budget preparation from a policy standard basis. The 2007-2008 *Vernon College Employee Handbook* (Section H, Business and Support Services, College Budget, [page 69](#)) specifies the budgetary process on a month by month basis from January of each year until the Board of Trustees approves the budget in August. As evidenced in the official [minutes](#) of the Board of Trustees meeting on August 29, 2007, the budget was reviewed and approved by the Board of Trustees.

When the President's Council meets in January to begin the budget preparation process, the Vernon College Annual Plan is reviewed and priorities are assigned. After the Council agrees on the *Annual Plan* items to include as priorities for the coming year the budget packets are prepared and delivered to the divisional deans by the Dean of Administrative Services. The process begins and culminates with input from the entire college community with the approval of the budget in August (2007-2008 *Vernon College Employee Handbook*, Section H, Business and Support Services, College Budget, [page 69](#)).

The proposed priorities are discussed with the Board of Trustees at regular scheduled meetings of the Board during the spring and early summer. The Board of Trustees reviews as an agenda item, a preliminary budget detailed on a department or program by program basis in the May or June meeting of each year. Salaries are discussed and

increases are approved for the future budget period and the increases are incorporated into the budget that is delivered for approval in the August meeting. The budget is always approved by the Board of Trustees in August of each year.

Comprehensive Standard 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:

3.2.2.1 - the institution's mission;

3.2.2.2 - the fiscal stability of the institution;

3.2.2.3 - institutional policy, including policies concerning related and affiliated corporate entities and all auxiliary services;

3.2.2.4 - related foundations (athletic, research, etc.) and other corporate entities whose primary purpose is to support the institution and/or its programs. **(Governing Board Control)**

COMPLIANCE

Narrative:

Vernon College derives its legal authority from [Texas Education Code, Section 130.003](#). Operational control is vested in a seven-member publicly elected Board of Trustees. The governing board is provided for by Article Seven of the Constitution of the State of Texas and is organized pursuant to the Texas Education Code, House Bill 235, Acts of the 61st Legislature, Regular Session, 1969, and subsequent amendments. Such authorization is codified in the Texas Statutes Education Code, Chapter 130, Section 130.040 which states *a union junior college, a county junior, or a joint-county junior college shall be governed, administered, and controlled by and under the direction of a board of trustees of seven members unless the number of members is increased as authorized by Section 130.082(d)*.

The chief duty of the Board of Trustees is to provide for the progress and welfare of the College and to establish, upon recommendation by the President of the College, the policies which govern the College's organization and operation. An individual Board member speaks for the Board only when the Board delegates such authority. As a governing body, the Board performs its duties as follows: *Have the exclusive power to govern and oversee the management of the College District. Education Code 11.151(b); Provide policy direction for the College District and adopt such rules, regulations, and bylaws as the Board deems advisable. Education Code 51.352(b), 130.082(d); and Establish goals consistent with the College District's role and mission. Education Code 51.352(d)* [[Section BAA Legal](#) (Board Legal Status, Duties, and Responsibilities) of the Vernon College Board Policy Manual]

3.2.2.3 Institutional Policy: The Vernon College Board of Trustees' legal authority regarding institutional policy is clearly defined. The Vernon College Board Policy Manual outlines the Powers, Duties, and Responsibilities of the Board. The responsibility of the Board is outlined in the Vernon College Board Policy Manual, [Section BAA Legal](#) (Powers, Duties, Responsibilities) and is excerpted as follows: *Provide policy direction for the College District and adopt such rules, regulations, and bylaws as the Board*

deems advisable. The Texas Education Code, [Section 51.352](#) affirms the role of the Board of Trustees as the policy maker of the institution by stating the governing board of an institution of higher education shall provide the policy direction for each institution of higher education under its management and control.

Recent examples of the Board approving policies include: Board approves the proposed budget for 2007-2008; Board approves recommendations from Instructional Services regarding fee waivers for Hazelwood-eligible students; Board approves “0” tuition for seminar participants for a surgical technology conference; and Board approves the 2007-2008 Student Handbook ([Aug 29, 2007 Board Meeting minutes](#)). Board approves articulation agreement with the Vernon ISD for dual credit/concurrent enrollment courses for 2007-2008 ([May 23, 2007 Board Meeting minutes](#)). Board approves the recommendations from the Program/Discipline Evaluation Task Force regarding deactivation of Spanish Language Interpreter program; and Board approves independent auditors to conduct the annual audit for year ending August 31, 2007 ([February 28, 2007 Board Meeting minutes](#)).

Documentation

1. Texas Education Code, [Section 130.003](#)
2. Vernon College Board Policy Manual, [Section BAA Legal](#) (Board Legal Status, Duties, and Responsibilities)
3. [Vernon College Mission](#), Vernon College General Catalog
4. [Vernon College Mission](#), Vernon College Student Handbook
5. [Vernon College Mission](#), Vernon College Website
6. Texas Education Code, [Section 51.352](#)
7. [Aug 29, 2007 Board Meeting minutes](#)
8. [May 23, 2007 Board Meeting minutes](#)
9. [February 28, 2007 Board Meeting minutes](#)
10. [Memorandum of Understanding](#)

3.2.2.3

OFF-SITE COMMITTEE COMMENTS

Non-Compliance

The College has clear statutory authority to operate the College. However, the College operates auxiliary enterprises such as the bookstore, recreation room, snack bar, and cafeteria. The visiting committee should further review policies related to the operation of the auxiliary enterprises.

3.2.2.3

VERNON COLLEGE RESPONSE TO OFF-SITE COMMITTEE COMMENTS

Vernon College operates a number of auxiliary enterprises as noted by the Off-Site Committee. Each operation is managed and controlled by the appropriate department

of the College. The *Employee Handbook* ([page 82](#)) specifies policies and procedures for the operation of each auxiliary enterprise function.

Auxiliary Enterprises

College Bookstores

The college bookstore operations report to the Associate Dean of Administrative Services. The bookstore operations are supervised by a Director of Book Store Services. Each of the two stores has a bookstore manager and one bookstore clerk. One store is located on the Vernon Campus. The second store is located in the Century City Center in Wichita Falls. All books to be utilized in classes are ordered and stocked in the appropriate store. A limited amount of school and teaching supplies are also available. Each store also has for sale college logo imprinted items. The bookstore staff works closely with the instructional and administrative division to provide necessary items for their operations. All net profits of the stores are allocated for scholarships to students after the close of each fiscal year. The Scholarship Committee of the College award scholarships to students according to the approved policy and procedures for awarding student scholarships.

Student Housing

The college housing reports to the Dean of Student Services. The college provides student housing only on the Vernon Campus. The housing office has one director and three one half time assistant directors. The housing office charges fees as approved by the College Board of Trustees. Collection of the fees for room and board is made in the business office at the cashiers' counter. All operational costs are reported for the housing unit. Revenues are generated by student approved rental fees. Any shortfall at year's end between expenditures and rental revenue is covered by an allocation of local ad valorem taxes so that the unit does not report an operating loss for the fiscal year. The Dean of Student Services conducts housing surveys with other community/junior colleges of like size and number to ensure the rates charged for occupancy are realistic for services offered.

Foodservices

The foodservice operations report through the Division of Administrative Services. Foodservices are offered on the Vernon Campus. The cafeteria operation is contracted to a third party vendor, Great Western Campus Dining, Inc. Three meals a day five days a week are offered. The cafeteria is closed on Saturday and Sunday. A meal rate is charged to all housing students and is paid along with the room rate on a semester by semester basis. The College pays the vendor for dining services to housing students on a weekly basis throughout each of the fall and spring semesters. The College Board of Trustees approves the meal rates for housing students annually. The college is responsible for expenditures for service and cooking equipment and various cooking

utensils. Net revenue from the foodservice operation is recorded and utilized in future periods for equipment updates or any other foodservice related costs.

Student Activities

Student activities are operated with ultimate oversight by the Dean of Student Services. A Director of Student Activities oversees the program of student activities on the Vernon Campus. A wide variety of activities are offered. A Board approved student activity fee is charged to all Vernon Campus students to pay for the activities program. The expenditures for student activities are accounted for in a separate budget and the net revenue is accumulated for future student activity offerings. A Student Government Association assists in the student activity offerings on the Vernon Campus while a Student Forum assists with offerings at the Century City Center in Wichita Falls.

Health Services

A health clinic is operated on the Vernon Campus under the direction of the Dean of Student Services. A doctor is on campus for two hours weekly in each of the long semesters. A nurse is on campus each morning of the fall and spring semesters. A Board approved fee is assessed to all Vernon Campus students to offset the costs of the clinic. The revenue and expenditures are accounted for annually with the net revenue held for future expenditures.

Intercollegiate Athletic Programs

Vernon College offers three NJCAA programs and one NIRA program. All intercollegiate athletic programs report to the Dean of Student Services. Sports offered are women's volleyball, women's fast pitch softball, men's baseball and men's and women's rodeo. The programs are governed by national organizational guidelines. The Dean of Student Services also serves as the Athletic Director. The programs have detailed individual budgets and all staff report to the Dean for operational direction. The volleyball, softball and baseball programs have a full-time head coach and one half time assistant coach. The rodeo program has a head coach. All costs are covered by a transfer of local ad valorem taxes at year end.

Comprehensive Standard 3.2.3

The board has a policy addressing conflict of interest. **(Board Conflict of Interest)**

COMPLIANCE

Narrative:

The Vernon College Board Policy Manual contains the policy regarding conflict of interest by any member of the Vernon College Board of Trustees in Section [Section BBFA Legal](#) (Conflict of Interest) and [Section BBFA Exhibit](#) (Conflict of Interest). The Board of Trustees endorses a Code of Professional Ethics, published in the Vernon College Board Policy Manual, [Section BBF Local](#) (Board Member Statement of Ethics). This code of ethics states, in part, that a trustee will: *Avoid being placed in a position of conflict of interest, and refrain from using my Board position for personal or partisan gain; Bring about desired changes through legal and ethical procedures; Render all decisions based on the available facts and my independent judgment, and refuse to surrender that judgment to individuals or special interest groups; and Remember always that my first and greatest concern must be the educational welfare of the students attending the college.*

Documentation

1. Vernon College Board Policy Manual, [Section BBFA Legal](#) (Conflict of Interest)
2. Vernon College Board Policy Manual, [Section BBFA Exhibit](#) (Conflict of Interest)
3. Vernon College Board Policy Manual, [Section BBF Local](#) (Board Member Statement of Ethics)

3.2.3

OFF SITE COMMITTEE COMMENTS

Non-Compliance

According to the VC Board Policy Manual, Section BBFA Local, a code of ethics should be followed by every board member. However, the Review Committee should review the policies dealing with conflict of interests, as the current policy could potentially allow Board members with conflicts of interest to act on issues where these conflicts exist. In particular, the Conflict of Interest Disclosure Policy regarding "Majority Conflict" states, "if a Trustee is required to file and does file an affidavit, that trustee shall not be required to abstain from further participation in the matter or matters requiring such an affidavit if a majority of the Trustees are likewise required to file and do file affidavits of similar interests on the same official action." The policy seems to place the College in a vulnerable position from activities in which a majority of the Board of Trustees has a financial interest in the business transactions with the College.

3.2.3

VERNON COLLEGE RESPONSE TO OFF-SITE COMMITTEE COMMENTS

Vernon College has reviewed the Conflict of Interest Policy and it is with noted respect that the College acknowledges the concerns of the Off-site Review Committee. The basic interpretation of the “Majority Conflict” is that *if there is a conflict of interest with a majority of the board members, then there is no conflict of interest*. Though this practice may seem odd, for a small community college which draws its Board members from an equally small community, it is feasible that there could be a conflict of interest (the *same* conflict of interest) with a majority of Board members. Though this has not happened any time in the recent past and is not projected to happen in the future, it is within the realm of possibility that a majority of Board members could have the same conflict of interest. If so, then the premise that a *conflict of interest for a majority means no conflict of interest exists* allows the Board to continue to conduct the business of the College.

Comprehensive Standard 3.2.12

The institution's chief executive officer controls the institution's fund-raising activities exclusive of institution-related foundations that are independent and separately incorporated. **(Fund-raising Activities)**

COMPLIANCE

Narrative:

The Vernon College chief executive officer has control over the institution's [fund raising](#) activities. This authority is outlined in the Vernon College Employee Handbook. The policy states, in part, *staff or staff groups who wish to raise funds and all off-campus fund-raising must be approved in advance through the Office of the College President and the Office of Institutional Advancement is responsible for overseeing and coordinating all private philanthropy fund-raising for Vernon College.* The Director of Institutional Advancement coordinates fund-raising efforts with the President and has major responsibility for the fund-raising activities for the College. The Director of Institutional Advancement [reports](#) directly to the College President, therefore, the chief executive officer (president) has ultimate control for the institution's fund-raising.

Documentation

1. [Fundraising](#), Vernon College Employee Handbook
2. [Vernon College Organizational Chart](#)

3.2.12

OFF-SITE COMMITTEE COMMENTS

Non-Compliance

The President has designated that fund-raising should be coordinated through the Office of Institutional Advancement. According to the *Vernon College Employee Handbook*, all gifts, donations, endowments, and gifts in kind are to be handled through this office. However, any club functions or athletic camp functions were not described. Although, this section seems to be compliant, further investigation of other fund raising activities should be investigated by the visiting committee. Listed in the *Vernon College 2007-2008 General Catalog*, page 46 under organizations, there is an extensive list of groups that could have potential fund raising activities.

3.2.12

VERNON COLLEGE RESPONSE TO OFF-SITE COMMITTEE COMMENTS

The Vernon College President has delegated oversight of the fundraising activities for Vernon College Student Services Organizations and Clubs to the Dean of Student

Services. The specific process for organization or club fundraisers is outlined in the Student Handbook under Definition of College Organizations or Clubs, [Fundraiser Rules and Regulations](#). All fundraising activities must be approved in advance and timely submission of the appropriate forms are required ([Student Fund Raising Approval Form](#), [Student Fund-Raising Deposit Form](#)). All organizations and clubs are allowed a maximum of 4 fundraisers per semester and all fundraising must follow the spirit of Vernon College's Statement of Purpose. At the end of each fundraising activity, all organizations or clubs must submit a financial report to the Office of Student Services. Copies are provided to the Director of Student Relations and the Director of Institutional Advancement.

Comprehensive Standard 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. This (policy) applies to students, faculty, and staff. **(Intellectual Property Rights)**

COMPLIANCE

Narrative:

Vernon College provides clear policies concerning ownership of materials, compensation, copyright issues and the use of revenue derived from the creation and production of all intellectual property. The Academic Integrity Policy which is published in the [Vernon College General Catalog](#) as well as [Student Handbook](#) includes a clause regarding plagiarism. Faculty are provided with information in both the [Faculty Handbook](#) and the [Instructor Handbook](#) regarding ownership of materials, copyrights and web-links such as <http://www.copyright.gov/circs/circ1.html> to answer questions they may have. Ownership, copyright and compensation are also covered in the Vernon College Board Policy Manual, [Section DBD Local](#) (Interest in Property).

Documentation

1. [Academic Integrity Policy](#), Vernon College General Catalog
2. [Academic Integrity Policy](#), Vernon College Student Handbook
3. [Academic Integrity](#), Vernon College Faculty Handbook
4. [Intellectual Property Policy](#), Vernon College Instructor Handbook
5. Vernon College Board Policy Manual, [Section DBD Local](#) (Interest in Property)

3.2.14

OFF-SITE COMMITTEE COMMENTS

Non-Compliance

VC has an Intellectual Property Policy published in the *Vernon College Instructor Handbook* that clearly addresses the use of revenue derived from the creation and production of all intellectual property by employees, which is presumed to include both faculty and staff. However, the institution's publications do not address this matter for students. The *Vernon College 2007-2008 General Catalog* and the *Student Handbook* contain an Academic Integrity Policy which clearly addresses plagiarism and academic misconduct, but is silent with regard to the use of revenue derived from the creation and production of intellectual property.

3.2.14

VERNON COLLEGE RESPONSE TO OFF-SITE COMMITTEE COMMENTS

In response to the concerns raised by the off-site committee, Vernon College compiled the following institutional policy regarding student intellectual property rights:

Student Intellectual Property Rights

Set forth below are rights and responsibilities regarding intellectual property created as a student at Vernon College. Any intellectual property (such as research papers, essays, inventions, discoveries, creations and new technologies) conceived or first reduced to practice by a student at Vernon College as a work product (including homework assignments, laboratory experiments, special and independent study projects) of a course will be owned by the student. Vernon College does not claim ownership of such intellectual property.

6/17/08

This policy is published in the 2008-2009 *Vernon College Student Handbook* (page 43) and the 2008-2009 *Vernon College Instructor Handbook* (page 50). The policy will also be published in the 2009-2010 *Vernon College General Catalog*.

Comprehensive Standard 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
- 3.3.1.2 administrative support services
- 3.3.1.3 educational support services
- 3.3.1.4 research with its educational mission, if appropriate
- 3.3.1.5 community/public service within its educational mission, if appropriate

COMPLIANCE

Narrative:

Vernon College demonstrates compliance in the identification and assessment of outcomes, the extent to which it achieves these outcomes, and provides evidence of improvement based on the analyses of the results. The [College Priorities](#), [College Directive Goals](#), and each unit's goals in the [Annual Plan](#) identify expected outcomes for the educational programs and for administrative and educational support services. Each curricular, administrative, and educational support unit annually sets goals or desired outcomes in relation to the institutional [mission](#), and the annual College Priorities and College Directives.

Each unit [evaluates](#) its goals at the end of the academic year, assessing results and indicating what improvement needs to be made. The unit identifies how it has used or will use the results of assessment in further planning and refinement of its services.

The Annual Plan assembles the data for review by the [Planning and Assessment Committee](#). Observations from that review are incorporated into annual College Priorities, which give focus for the ensuing [planning cycle](#).

Establishing outcomes for each functional unit of the College (educational, administrative, and support), assessing the achievement of those outcomes, and providing evidence of the use of results for continuous improvement are the core components of the planning process at Vernon College.

Identifying Expected Outcomes Process

Since 1987, Vernon College has conducted formalized planning and review of its educational programs. In 2002, the College reviewed the existing procedures and subsequently implemented the following revisions which are still in place:

- Expanded the inclusion of the College's non-instructional functions;
- adopted a new planning and review template with an emphasis on setting program outcomes;

- moved the begin/end cycle dates for the planning/review process from the fall of the year to the spring to ensure better alignment of planning and budgeting;
- implemented the new planning procedures for the 2005-2006 planning period

The Annual Planning process and form adopted by the College requires an outcomes-based review of the prior year and an outcomes-based plan for the coming year. Expected outcomes are clearly defined through the use of success criteria, the specification of responsible parties, and the designation of time lines.

The Annual Plan form is designed to lead the unit through an analysis of the outcomes met/not met during the prior year, an analysis of additional key performance indicators, and a review of the status of decisions made the year before. The results identified in this review are used to set the expected outcomes for the next year, to set the additional key performance indicators to be monitored, and to formulate the decisions/strategies necessary for achieving improvements in the coming academic year.

Evidence of the use of results from this review process can be found in five areas:

- the new outcomes established
- the evaluation methods determined
- the new decisions/strategies formulated
- the assessment reviewed
- the narrative outlining the *use of results*

Documentation of Performance

By March of each year, the Institutional Research office sends all Annual Planning forms to each functional unit. The individual College units meet to review and document their performance during the prior year. Once this review has been completed, each unit of the College uses the assessment results to develop and document plans to improve performance during the coming year. Each unit of the College (instructional and non-instructional) completes its Annual Planning document by May.

Assessing Expected Outcomes Process

The Annual Planning process and template require that outcome results be assessed in relation to the success criteria established for each expected unit outcome. Unit administrators review their annual planning document and then meet with their units to discuss improvements required, institutional implications, strategies, budget considerations, equipment/personnel considerations, and common themes. The Institutional Research office presents the Summary of the Evaluation of the Annual Plan each year to the Planning and Assessment Committee for review and for discussion of outcomes (both met and unmet). The Planning and Assessment Committee makes any recommendations and/or proposes any revisions to the process to the President's Council.

Evidence of Improvement Based on Analysis of Results

The Institutional Research office makes available a Summary of the Evaluation of the Annual Plan outlining improvements achieved as a result of planning and evaluation. Vernon College has demonstrated that the College identifies expected outcomes for each of its functional units (educational, administrative, and educational support) through its Annual Planning process. Detailed examples presented in this section illustrate that the College systematically uses the results of these assessments to improve its programs and services provided.

Educational and Administrative Support Services

Establishing outcomes for each functional unit of the College (administrative and educational support), assessing the achievement of those outcomes, and providing evidence of the use of results for continuous improvement are the core components of the planning process at Vernon College.

Educational and Educational Support Services

Instructional Services Division: Goals, Objectives, and Strategies from the *2006-2007 Annual Plan* and the *Evaluation of the 2006-2007 Annual Plan*

Example 1

College Priority Two

- Improve the delivery of existing programs and courses

Goal: Attract quality adjunct faculty to teach at Vernon College

Objective #11: Enhance the attractiveness of working as a part-time instructor at Vernon College by increasing the current adjunct salary scale as evidenced by ease of hiring qualified adjunct instructors.

Strategy: Request additional monies for salary increase

How the objective will be evaluated: Report from the Division Chairs on the ease of attracting qualified adjunct instructors.

Results: Not Achieved

Assessment: Funds to increase the adjunct salary rate from \$1,350 to \$1,500 were not approved during the 2006-2007 budget funding year.

Use of Results for Improvement: Instructional Services believes that in order to be competitive in the "adjunct market" the college must continue to boost the adjunct salary rate. Therefore, this objective will be carried over to the 2007-2008 Annual Plan.

Example 2

College Priorities Two, Seven, and Eight

- Improve the delivery of existing programs and courses

- Acquire and support appropriate technology and facilities for curricula and administrative enhancement

- Develop and implement intervention strategies which improve the retention and success rate of students

Goal: Provide a quality distance learning program at Vernon College

Objective #25: Provide a secure, proctored instructional testing environment for Internet/ITV students as evidenced by the existence of a facility at Vernon and Century City Center and a schedule depicting availability.

Strategy: Secure Funds to staff instructional testing lab; hire proctor and schedule testing

How the objective will be evaluated: Evidence by the existence of Vernon and Century City Center testing lab and a schedule depicting availability

Results: Achieved

Assessment: Instructional Testing Centers were established at the Vernon and Century City locations in spring 2007 due to concerns over distance learning testing integrity. Students enrolled in Internet and hybrid courses may use the Instructional Testing Centers for required proctored tests. Hours of operations are posted on the Vernon College website and in the Campus Announcement section of the Blackboard (WebCT) Learning Management System.

Use of Results for Improvement: Feedback will be gathered from faculty/staff as to whether or not the testing centers have indeed provided a secure testing environment for Internet/ITV students. Students and faculty will be surveyed as to the appropriateness of Instructional Testing Center schedules.

Example 3

College Priorities Seven and Nine

- Acquire and support appropriate technology and facilities for curricula and administrative enhancement
- Increase professional development activities for college employees

Goals: Grow leadership from faculty ranks; and effectively utilize existing faculty, classroom space, and instructional budget allocations for maximum benefit to the student and the institution

Objective #21: Provide current and relevant STARLINK professional development opportunities to faculty as evidenced by an increase over the 2005-2006 activities in professional development participation by Vernon College faculty members.

Strategy: Secure funds to repair satellite equipment; contract with vendor to repair satellite; advertise and promote STARLINK broadcasts; and provide incentives for faculty attendance

How the objective will be evaluated: Evidenced by an increase in professional development participation by faculty members

Results: Achieved

Assessment: STARLINK satellite equipment repair was completed 8-31-2006. The Library Assistant/Media Specialist at Century City was designated as the technical contact and to disseminate information about the broadcasts to faculty members. Faculty attendance was reported on three broadcasts during 2006-2007. No participation was reported in 2005-2006.

Use of Results for Improvement: Satellite broadcasts for STARLINK programs will be discontinued 9-1-2007. STARLINK Training Services will broadcast the programs live through streaming video and then archive them for later viewing on their website. STARLINK will also send a DVD of each program they produce to Vernon College. The Director of Distance Learning and the Director of Library Services will maintain the DVDs as resources available for all faculty to check out. Library staff will track the use of the DVDs. The Library Assistant/Media Specialist will seek additional venues to promote the STARLINK Broadcasts for quality professional development activities for faculty including forwarding broadcast information to all faculty, sending information to Division Chairs to give out at faculty meetings, and posting fliers in the mail rooms at each campus. The annual report for professional development will include faculty who checked out STARLINK DVDs. STARLINK has also been added to the Professional Development Activities report that each faculty member completes annually.

Administrative Support Services

Student Services Division: Goals, Objectives, and Strategies from the *2006-2007 Annual Plan* and the *Evaluation of the 2006-2007 Annual Plan*

Example 4

Student Activities

College Priorities Two, Five, Seven, and Eight

- Improve the delivery of existing programs and courses
- Improve and expand student access and success in programs through the use of educational support services and various resources and facilities
- Acquire and support appropriate technology and facilities for curricula and administrative enhancement
- Develop and implement intervention strategies which improve the retention and success rate of students

Goal: Encourage fellowship and inspire student leadership among students on the Vernon Campus

Objective #3: Develop an interactive leadership environment for the Student Government Association (SGA)

Strategy: Create a WebCT resource classroom for the purpose of team-building and self-development

How the objective will be evaluated: Evaluated through feedback by SGA

Results: Achieved

Assessment: A WebCT environment entitled "Leadership in Action" was developed for use by members of the Vernon College SGA. The environment served the purpose of team-building and self-development by including resources such as tracking volunteer hours, resume builders and scholarship essay writing tools, meeting agendas and minutes, as well as a master calendar.

Use of Results for Improvement: Student usage of this resource will be encouraged and monitored on an ongoing basis and adapted as needed.

Administrative Services Division: Goals, Objectives, and Strategies from the 2006-2007 Annual Plan and the Evaluation of the 2006-2007 Annual Plan

Example 5

Physical Plant Operations

College Priorities Two, Five, Seven, and Eight

- Improve and expand student access and success in programs through the use of educational support services and various resources and facilities
- Acquire and support appropriate technology and facilities for curricula and administrative enhancement

Goal: Provide updated facilities on the Vernon campus

Objective #1: Continue with facility upgrades on the Vernon Campus

Strategy: Replace the roof on the Colley Student Center; update the Facilities Master Plan; transition to College personnel the management for the Century City Center – Dean of Administrative services will begin the management of the leased spaces instead of the contracted lease manager

How the objective will be evaluated: Architectural plans approved and roof replaced by summer of 2007

Results: Achieved

Assessment: Colley Center roof removed and new roof applied. [Vernon College Master Facilities Plan](#) completed, reviewed by staff, and Board of Trustees. The Dean of Administrative Services began and continues to supervise the leased tenants within the Century City Center in Wichita Falls.

Use of Results for Improvement: The *Master Facilities Plan* process continues to seek broad based input from committee members of the Facilities Planning Committee. The plan incorporates not only facility updates but also include historical data, preventive maintenance data, and perpetual maintenance data. The *Facilities Master Plan* assists the College in the overall planning process. The institutional oversight for the leased properties within the Century City Center by a college official has proven to be a good move. The institution has a better feel for the relationship between the lessees and the institution as owner of the property.

Both the complete *2006-2007 Annual Plan* and *2007-2008 Annual Plan* are provided in the full documentation at the end of this narrative.

Educational Programs

Since 2001, the College has experienced a gradual evolution in the process of assessing outcomes in its educational disciplines and programs. The College first began framing student learning outcome statements in terms of enrollment, credentials awarded, grades, and graduation. The College has expanded the process to include course outcomes, skills competencies, and the formulation of global student learning outcomes. Instructional units are encouraged to assess the macro competencies specified in the curriculum program descriptions, covered in capstone courses, covered in co-op work experiences, and covered in licensure/certification examinations.

Programs and disciplines are evaluated according to a five-year rotating basis [schedule](#) to ensure consistency with the college mission statement, programmatic quality and improvement, adequate enrollment and student demand, accountability, and efficient management. Preliminary evaluations are assigned to faculty members and Division Chairs and a Program/Discipline Evaluation Task Force. Evaluations are reviewed by the Dean of Instructional Services, Academic Council, and then by the College President, who makes decisions on the future status of programs or disciplines. The Board of Trustees alone has the authority to continue or terminate a program/discipline based upon the recommendation of the College President. These evaluations and procedures are available in the [Program Evaluation](#), [Discipline Evaluation](#), and [General Education Program Evaluation](#) documents.

With the need to directly assess student learning outcomes, Vernon College began to determine learning outcomes in all courses taught at Vernon College. As a result, all course syllabi specify learning outcomes which are directly supportive of the program outcomes. To keep course and learning outcomes current, Division Chairs continually work with instructors to review course syllabi to relate course learning outcomes with program learning outcomes. Course learning outcomes are stated in such a way as to permit direct measurement, thereby documenting that course, program, and general education outcomes are achieved. Concomitant with the review of the syllabi, instructors determine student assessment necessary to demonstrate achievement of the course learning outcomes (e.g. competence in writing, understanding of scientific principles, or skills in a technical area.) The assessment, determined by faculty, may be in the form of an examination, a project, a critique of a speech, analysis of a scientific or social problem, or an instructor's assessment report on a demonstrated skill.

- Assessment of the General Education Program at Vernon College was added to the [Program/Discipline Evaluation rotation](#) (for the 2009-2010 academic year) to be sure the general education core at Vernon College is assessed as a program. The General Education Program Evaluation, like other programs and disciplines at Vernon College, includes multiple measures to assess the outcomes of the General Education Program.
- Vernon College has begun to implement layers of evaluation within our General Education Program to further assess the student learning outcomes:
 - At the course level, pre/post tests with documented and meaningful results will be revamped by faculty and Division Chairs. During the spring and summer of 2008, the Student Core Competencies Committee will research to determine the best way to develop and document pre/post test assessment (though the College has been doing this, there is a desire to add a "quality control measure" to the process along with the quality enhancement measures that already exist through pre/post testing). A revised Pre/Post Test Procedure will be developed by May 2008. Revised pre/post tests will be developed by July 2008. Then revised pre/post tests will be implemented in the fall 2008 semester. Standardized finals that include the 15 question pre/post test instrument will be used in the

courses. This will serve as a quality control measure for adjunct faculty members.

- At the discipline level, the evaluation of the general education core becomes part of the Program/Discipline Evaluation process (see above).
- At the cross-discipline level, [VConfirm the Core](#) will continue to be used. The Student Core Competencies Committee has formed an Ad-Hoc Assessment Committee, consisting of Sandy Gabel, the Committee Chair and a Computer Sciences faculty member, Joe Johnston, the Chair of the Communication Division and an English faculty member, Dr. Gary Don Harkey, the Chair of Mathematics and Science Division and an Agriculture faculty member, and Dr. Brenda Kays, the Dean of Instructional Services. The charge of the Ad-Hoc Assessment Committee will be to determine if *VConfirm the Core* is working, revamp if needed, and determine if the model should continue to be used; determine if there are other types of assessments (such as portfolios) that should be used; and continue to educate faculty on the Five Global Student Learning Outcomes
- At the institutional level, the Student Core Competencies Committee will continue to explore the use of MAPS as an exit assessment tool. Vernon College is seeking a MAPS-ETS consultation during April 2008 and will begin implementing the testing through the Testing Center in the fall.

Through its Annual Planning and Program/Discipline Evaluation processes, Vernon College demonstrates compliance in the identification and assessment of outcomes, the extent to which it achieves these outcomes, and provides evidence of improvement based on the analyses of the results.

Documentation

1. [Vernon College Mission Statement](#)
2. [Vernon College Vision](#)
3. [Vernon College Values](#)
4. [Vernon College Strategic Plan 2006-2010](#)
5. [Vernon College Priorities, 08-09](#)
6. [Planning and Assessment Committee](#)
7. [Vernon College Annual Planning Calendar 2007-2008](#)
8. [Vernon College Annual Planning Calendar 2008-2009](#)
9. [Vernon College Annual Planning Calendar 2006-2007](#)
10. [Vernon College 2006-2007 Annual Plan](#)
11. [Vernon College 2007-2008 Annual Plan](#)
12. [Evaluation of Annual Plan 2006-2007](#)
13. [Vernon College Priorities 07-08](#)
14. [Vernon College Priorities 06-07](#)
15. [Vernon College Directive Goals 08-09](#)
16. [Vernon College Directive Goals 07-08](#)
17. [Vernon College Directive Goals 06-07](#)
18. [Program/Discipline Evaluation Schedule](#)

19. [Program/Discipline Evaluation Results 2006](#)
20. [Program/Discipline Evaluation Results 2007](#)
21. [Program Evaluation](#)
22. [Discipline Evaluation](#)
23. [General Education Program Evaluation](#)
24. [VConfirm the Core](#)
25. [Vernon College Master Facilities Plan](#)

3.3.1

OFF-SITE COMMITTEE COMMENTS

Non-Compliance

All units evaluate goals at the end of the academic year and identify how results will be used. This information is summarized by the Planning and Assessment Committee which establishes priorities for the next year. Units, during the annual planning process, complete a template that contains outcome results, and each unit identifies required improvements, budget considerations, and equipment/personnel requirements. The templates did not reference the assessments, such as CCSSE, graduated students, and VConfirm the Core, in demonstrating use of results.

3.3.1

VERNON COLLEGE RESPONSE TO OFF-SITE COMMITTEE COMMENTS

Vernon College is pleased to more clearly articulate the use of cited references in its institutional effectiveness and planning processes. In cases where the noted assessments were needed, the units would reference such assessments if used in demonstrating results. The primary place where *VConfirm the Core* is used to demonstrate use of results doesn't actually come from the template, but from the more comprehensive evaluation of core competencies / general education, as is noted in Comprehensive Standard 3.5.1.

Throughout the summer and fall of 2006, the Student Core competencies Committee gathered information about core competencies from peers at Vernon College as well as at other institutions and developed the five general education core competencies listed (*Vernon College 2007-2008 General Catalog, page 72*) and (*Vernon College 2008-2009 General Catalog, page 74*). These competencies were developed from a review and discussion of those requirements established by other higher education institutions as well as the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board. Once the core competencies were developed and adopted by the institution, the committee looked for a model to assess those competencies. The model developed by Pensacola Junior College was chosen and molded to fit with the Vernon College Mission and General Education Philosophy to create *VConfirm the Core*. This particular model appealed to the committee due to the fact that they believed the instrument could provide the necessary assessment measures in a non-threatening and readily understandable manner.

With [*VConfirm the Core*](#), Vernon College used the philosophy of *It Just Takes One* to begin the evaluation of the core competencies in the general education courses:

One Outcome: The Vernon College Student Core Competencies Committee will select only one outcome per semester to be assessed.

One Objective: Faculty will choose one related objective within that outcome to assess.

One Course: Faculty will choose one class section to assess.

One Assessment Tool: Faculty will choose one representative assignment to assess, using an assessment rubric.

One Assessment Report: Faculty will submit one report to the Division Chair summarizing student learning for the featured outcome, successful classroom activities, challenges to be addressed, and any recommendations.

This model was piloted in summer 2007 in two general education courses: COSC 1301 Microcomputer Applications and SPCH 1315 Public Speaking. The outcome chosen to be evaluated was Information Literacy. Each faculty member chose one of the objectives within the Information Literacy Rubric to evaluate, and chose or developed an assignment within their course to evaluate that outcome. At the end of the semester, the two faculty members used the proposed Planning and Report Documents within the *VConfirm the Core* model to record their findings. The Student Core Competencies Committee met and made some minor changes to the procedures for the core competencies assessment and published the final version of the *VConfirm the Core* model.

Before the fall 2007 semester began, the Student Core Competencies Committee, with the concurrence of the Division Chairs, selected courses to be assessed during the fall. The Student Core Competencies Committee met with the faculty members whose courses were selected and provided them with the *VConfirm the Core* model and training on how to implement.

The procedures for implementing *VConfirm the Core* are as follows:

Each semester instructors complete the outcome assessment for the selected courses. In doing this, instructors explain how each course outcome was evaluated, document the results of these assessments, and explain how these results may be used to improve the course. Instructors submit this information (in the Report document) to their Division Chairs at the same time final grades are due for each semester (or earlier).

Division Chairs, along with the faculty, also evaluate the assessments of the course outcomes, evaluate how well course outcomes are evidenced, and how the results are used to improve the course. Division Chairs use this information to discuss course improvements during the divisional meetings at the beginning of the fall and spring semesters. Two or more courses will be reviewed at the divisional meeting to ensure that all courses offered in a division are reviewed at least once every three years. If outcomes are not evident, changes are made in the course design to better facilitate the desired learning outcomes. Changes might include more effective learning-centered strategies taken from informed pedagogical best practices.

This process of evaluation is formative as well as summative so that the activities leading to the review are as valuable as the data itself. The Division Chairs submit the assessment of core curriculum with related documents to the Student Core Competencies Committee for review and endorsement. Results are collated and summarized, and the suggestions for improvement provided to the College faculty to share in a “best practices” format. Depending on the type of results/suggestions spawned through the process, recommendations may be forwarded to the Dean of Instructional Services (professional development activities) or Academic Council (curricular changes) for consideration (by either the discipline faculty or the Student Core Competencies Committee) or used in the Annual Planning Process at either the College or unit level.

Each department will continue to assess this same outcome of the core competencies using the same assessment rubrics in the Spring 2008 and Summer 2008 semesters. The cadre of faculty assessing core competencies in their courses will expand outside of the 15 hours of general education shared by all degrees at Vernon College and venture into the other General Education Core Competencies beginning in the fall 2008. Department faculty will evaluate the impact on student learning of any of the suggested changes to course content and teaching strategies. The departments will also continue to analyze the data and present the analysis to the appropriate Division Chair and the Student Core Competencies Committee for sharing with all faculty.

In addition to *VConfirm the Core*, the following methods have been and will continue to be used to identify expected outcomes, assesses the extent to which we achieve these outcomes, and provide evidence of improvement based on analysis of the results:

Percentage of Course Completers: The percentage of course completers at community colleges in Texas ranged from 78.5% to 99%, with an average of 84.49%. Vernon College had a 90.15% course completion rate, well above the state average. In fact, Vernon College’s percentage of course completers has ranged from 90% to 91.84% for the last three years.

Course Success: At Vernon College, a student must obtain a grade of A, B, or C in a course to be considered successful. The success rate in courses varies depending on the course, but range from 61% (Web Page Design) to 100% (Applied Music).

Graduate Satisfaction: Vernon College’s graduates report strong satisfaction with the general education received. On the most recent data collected, results indicated that 93% of students surveyed felt that the courses and programs at Vernon College did a good or excellent job of preparing them for employment or for continuing their education.

Pre/Post Test Assessment: Vernon College also uses the Pre/Post test assessment to review the percentage of improvement students have in courses and to determine if changes in curriculum need to be made to ensure students are learning the objectives for the course.

3.3.1.1 Educational programs, to include student learning outcomes

OFF-SITE COMMITTEE COMMENTS

Non-Compliance

Educational program outcomes and assessments have historically been dependant on a 5-year cycle program review that did not contain learning outcomes. The College has developed learning outcomes and is in the process of beginning to assess them. These assessments have been added to the 2009-2010 five-year rotation plan to ensure that the general education core and all academic disciplines are assessed. During the spring and summer 2008, pre/post tests that have been adopted to assess learning outcomes will be revamped. The procedure will be revamped by May 2008 and the pre/post tests will be developed by July 2008. Examples were not provided to demonstrate that pre/post tests are being used as the assessment tool nor was there evidence of improvements based on the use of results.

3.3.1.1

VERNON COLLEGE RESPONSE TO OFF-SITE COMMITTEE COMMENTS

Vernon College is pleased to more clearly define how pre/post tests have been and will be used as an assessment tool to assess student learning outcomes. [Pre/Post Test Assessment](#): Vernon College has used the Pre/Post test assessment in the past to review the percentage of improvement students have in courses and to determine if changes in curriculum need to be made to ensure students are learning the objectives for the course. However, the last time this was done in any systematic way was during the 04-05 academic year. Since then, the College has determined that the pre/post tests needed to be re-designed in order to be more effective. The pre/post tests are in the process of being re-designed and updated, and the new tests will be used in the fall 2008 semester. Using the results of the pre/post test to improve will not take place right at the end of the semester (after the data is gathered) but each instructional area will evaluate the results to determine if changes in curriculum need to be made.

3.3.1.2 Administrative support services

OFF-SITE COMMITTEE COMMENTS

Non-Compliance

In the administrative support services areas a WebCT environment for team building and self development for members of the SGA was implemented and a new roof was installed on Colley Center. However, a link between the cited assessments used and outcomes was not apparent.

3.3.1.2

VERNON COLLEGE RESPONSE TO OFF-SITE COMMITTEE COMMENTS

Vernon College is pleased to more clearly articulate the link between the cited assessments used and the outcomes for the following administrative support services goal:

Goal: Encourage fellowship and inspire student leadership among students on the Vernon Campus

Objective #3: Develop an interactive leadership environment for the Student Government Association (SGA)

Strategy: Create a WebCT resource classroom for the purpose of team-building and self-development

How the objective will be evaluated: Evaluated through feedback by SGA

Results: Achieved

Assessment: A WebCT environment entitled "Leadership in Action" was developed for use by members of the Vernon College SGA. The environment served the purpose of team-building and self-development by including resources such as tracking volunteer hours, resume builders and scholarship essay writing tools, meeting agendas and minutes, as well as a master calendar.

Use of Results for Improvement: Student usage of this resource will be encouraged and monitored on an ongoing basis and adapted as needed.

ADDENDUM: The web based leadership environment utilizing WebCT created flexibility for Student Government Association members and officers so that they could conduct meeting pre-business and committee work at times that were convenient for each individual member. This makes some of the time commitment required for SGA leadership positions adaptable to individual schedules thus opening up these positions to students whose schedules would otherwise not allow them to participate such as nontraditional students and VC athletes.

As for the new roof on the student center: The [Vernon College Master Facilities Plan](#) receives broad-based input from committee members of the Facilities Planning Committee and uses historical data, preventive maintenance data, and perpetual maintenance data to assess the need for and incorporate facility updates.

3.3.1.3 Educational support services

OFF-SITE COMMITTEE COMMENTS

Non-Compliance

An internet/ITV student testing center was established and a recommendation to increase adjunct faculty pay was requested but denied. However, a link between the cited assessments used and outcomes was not apparent. CCSSE, library survey, and other survey instruments were identified in 2.5 as assessment tools. There was no indication of a direct link to the cited assessments used to measure achievement of the outcomes.

3.3.1.3

VERNON COLLEGE RESPONSE TO OFF-SITE COMMITTEE COMMENTS

Vernon College is pleased to more clearly articulate the link between the cited assessments used and measurement of the achievement of outcomes. The primary use of surveys are the various library surveys ([Student Survey of Library Services](#), [Faculty Survey of Library Services](#), and [Library Survey of Internet Students](#)) used in the evaluation of learning/information resources. There are direct links between the assessment(s) used and the evaluation of resources to determine if improvements needed to be made. The [Vernon College Library Unit Plan](#) outlines what these assessment tools are and how they are used to improve the services and resources in the library and learning resource centers.

For example (and as outlined in Comprehensive Standard 3.8.1):

Developing a quality collection of informational resources remains a priority of the Vernon College Library System. Quality is maintained through:

1. Careful analysis of survey results.
 2. Adherence to professional guidelines.
 3. Faculty involvement in the selection and evaluation library and resource center collections.
 4. Review of Program/Discipline Evaluations.
 5. Annual planning and evaluation of goals and objectives.
- **Survey Results:** The Library System surveys students and faculty to determine user satisfaction with the book collection, database resources, and overall quality of library services. Surveys are used not only to measure satisfaction, but also to collect recommendations and to determine user awareness of the resources available.
 - **Database Collection:** Survey data indicates that the database collection is adequate to support student research. Of those on-site students accessing the databases during the 2006-2007 academic year, 93% indicated that they were able to locate the articles needed. Faculty responses were also favorable. When asked to rate the quality of electronic resources in 2006-2007, 100% of faculty rated the database collection as average or above.
 - **Print Collection:** An analysis of survey results indicates that students are pleased with the quality of print collections. Of those students needing print materials during the 2006-2007 academic year, 93% of on-site students indicated that they were able to locate the books needed to support their research. Of those instructors responding to the survey during the same year, 87% rated the print collection as fair or above. As prioritized in

the Unit Plan for 2007-2008, the Library will work with faculty in the selection and evaluation of collections.

- Distance Learning Library Services: The Library System is committed to supporting distance learners with efficient access to informational resources. Students are surveyed to determine the efficiency of the off campus access procedure and interlibrary loan services. Surveys collected in 2006-2007 indicated that 92% of students in online classes were able to access databases and e-books needed for their research. If interlibrary loan requests were filed, 87% of online students indicated that books and/or articles were received in a reasonable amount of time.
- Overall Quality of Library Services: When asked to rate the overall quality of library services during the 2006-2007 academic year, 98% of those students using library services rated the overall quality as average or above with 44% rating services as excellent and 46% as good. During the same year, 40% of the faculty rated the overall quality as excellent and 60% as good.

3.3.1.5 Community/public service within its educational mission, if appropriate

OFF-SITE COMMITTEE COMMENTS

Non-Compliance

The institution identifies a planning priority for expansion of public service; however, expected outcomes and assessments were not identified. Therefore, a determination could not be made as to using assessment to result in improvements.

3.3.1.5

VERNON COLLEGE RESPONSE TO OFF-SITE COMMITTEE COMMENTS

Vernon College is pleased to present how it identifies expected outcomes in the area of community/public service and assesses them. Priority 10 in the [Vernon College Priorities 07-08](#) for the 2007-2008 Academic year articulates the desire to expand the role of the College in the public service life of the community. This planning priority is further directed in the [Vernon College Directive Goals 07-08](#) which articulate the areas of public service the College is committed to expanding:

- 4) Promote Partnerships with the Independent School Districts Within Our Service Area by developing the College Connection Program by Focusing On:
 - a) Distance learning
 - b) Dual credit / concurrent enrollment
 - c) All technical programs
 - d) Transitional programs
 - e) Compact (short-term) training opportunities (multiple entry, multiple exit)
 - f) Vertical alignment with curriculum

- 5) Foster Relationships Within the College and Communities We Serve
 - a) Provide a safe, secure, and positive environment for our employees and students
 - b) Respond to education/training requests from members of our community
 - c) Sponsor charitable causes/organizations within our community
 - d) Serve in education, community, business, and charitable organizations

- 7) Serve More Students to Sustain Ability to Serve Our Communities and Service Area
 - a) Continually analyze the needs of our community members
 - b) Expand and renovate facilities, as appropriate, to accommodate the growing student population
 - c) Promote the College's programs and courses throughout our service area

Vernon College identifies expected outcomes in its community/public service arena and assesses them as is articulated in the [Evaluation of Annual Plan 2006-2007](#). A couple of examples are provided below:

Objective #32: Facilitate the transition of high school students into the college arena by conducting vertical alignment sessions between VC core subject matter experts and service area ISD core subject matter experts as evidenced by the existence of the alignment sessions and self-report of satisfaction/relevance from participants used to improve future sessions.

Results: Achieved

Assessment: Vertical Alignment sessions were held between college and high school faculty and curriculum designers for mathematics (Fall 2006) and English (Spring 2007) discipline members. All participants rated the workshop as satisfactory or above and commented that (1) this was good beginning with worthy goals; (2) it would foster a good connection between VC and high schools; (3) much work would be needed to make it practical and functional. The THECB has formed a P-16 initiative that will likely result in suggested and or mandated activities along these lines.

Use of Results for Improvement: Objective will be revised in accordance with THECB initiatives. Dean Johnston was appointed to serve as the liaison between the college and Coordinating Board and he will work on this element of the annual plan. This objective will be carried over to the 2007-2008 school year.

Objective #36: Expand VC's Allied Health offerings by supplementing professional/ancillary staff, conducting needs analysis and research aimed at gauging interest and need in the institution's SDA and developing programs accordingly as evidenced by the existence of an expanded credit and non-credit curriculum in comparison to the 2006-2007 school year.

Results: Achieved

Assessment: Needs analysis, pre-advisory committee meetings, evaluations, and research was conducted for Pharmacy Technician, Dental Assisting, Medical Lab Technician, and Physical Therapy Assistant programs.

Use of Results for Improvement: Pharmacy Technician and Dental Assisting became approved credit programs in August 2007. The Medical Lab Technician and Physical

Therapy Assistant programs never came to fruition due to lack of jobs (illustrated through the results of the needs analysis) or financial reasons (VC unable to shoulder the burden of start-up costs.) VC will continue to pursue funding avenues to support the "start-up" costs of a Physical Therapy Assistant program.

Comprehensive Standard 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)**

COMPLIANCE

Narrative:

Faculty members at Vernon College work in conjunction with the [Academic Council](#) to develop new courses and degrees and to evaluate the quality and relevance of current courses, programs, and disciplines. The administration at the College is involved in curriculum development and review primarily through the Academic Council. The Board of Trustees at Vernon College is involved in approving all new programs, the number and types of degrees offered by the College, the number and nature of the divisions at the College, and the extent to which the College offers off-campus programs.

The Dean of Instructional Services for the College is responsible for program coordination as well as curriculum development and review. Five Division Chairs comprise the instructional leadership team reporting directly to the Dean of Instructional Services. Each Division Chair heads one of the major instructional divisions: Behavioral and Social Science, Mathematics and Science, Communications, Information Industrial Technology, and Career and Technology Education. Division Chairs are assisted by coordinators or directors in the areas of Developmental Studies, Allied Health, and Distance Learning.

The [Curricula Review Process](#) excerpted from the Vernon College Employee Handbook illustrates that the College has adopted a program development and approval process that is led by the faculty and administration and that aligns with the policy and procedures required by the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board.

Workforce program and curriculum review/change is initiated through a [Program Advisory Committee](#) along with academically/experientially qualified full-time faculty. Academic program and curriculum review/change is primarily initiated by academically qualified full-time faculty. All curriculum changes are channeled through the Division Chairs and the Dean of Instructional Services. All [program and curriculum changes](#) are presented to the Academic Council and the College President for approval. The Academic Council oversees the addition, review, and evaluation of curricula. Members of this council include the Dean of Instructional Services, the Associate Dean of Career and Technology Education, representatives from the Admissions/Registrar's Office, a counselor, a librarian, Division Chairs, Director of Continuing Education, Faculty Senate representatives, Director of Institutional Research, Director of Distance Learning, Assistant to the Dean of Instructional Services, and select faculty members. If a new program is being considered, it is developed only after a need has been demonstrated and financial resources secured. If an instructional program is discontinued at Vernon

College, it is done in a way that will not harm students' transfer requirements and graduation needs. Any new workforce education program must be approved by an advisory committee, the [Academic Council](#), the College President, [Board of Trustees](#), and the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB) prior to implementation. Except for the use of advisory committees, the same review is required for transfer degrees. This review ensures that curricula are directly related to the mission statement of the college. This approval process may also involve required or voluntary external agency approval. The workforce education programs follow the curriculum development process as published in *Guidelines for Instructional Programs in Workforce Education* and in the *Workforce Education Course Manual*. Academic transfer degrees must include the Texas core curriculum requirements, and courses chosen from the *Academic Course Guide Manual* and the *Common Course Numbering System*.

Documentation

1. [Curricula Review Process](#), Vernon College Employee Handbook
2. [Program Advisory Committee](#), Vernon College Employee Handbook
3. Example - [Pharmacy Tech program and curriculum change](#), November 20, 2006 Academic Council Minutes
4. [Board of Trustees approval](#) of Pharmacy Tech program

3.4.1

OFF-SITE COMMITTEE COMMENTS

Non-Compliance

The institution presented a "Curricula Review Process" that was excerpted from the *Vernon College Employee Handbook*. This process states that program and curriculum changes are "primarily initiated by academically qualified full-time faculty." Such changes are then reviewed by a Division Chair, the Dean of Instructional Services, the Academic Council, College President, and the Board of Trustees. Minutes of the November 20, 2006 meeting of the Academic Council were presented. At this meeting a new activity course and four program changes, including changing the Pharmacy Technician Program from a noncredit continuing education program to a credit program, were approved. Minutes of the April 27, 2007 meeting of the Board of Trustees of the College, where the trustees approved the change in the Pharmacy Technician Program, were also presented. There is a lack of detail on the faculty role in the council such as method of faculty choice, number of faculty serving, and length of service time on the committee.

3.4.1

VERNON COLLEGE RESPONSE TO OFF-SITE COMMITTEE COMMENTS

Vernon College publishes policies on the responsibilities and authority of faculty in academic and governance matters. The *Board Policy Manual* under [EE \(LOCAL\)](#) states that *specific procedures involving input from faculty, administrative staff and the*

*governing board, shall be followed in curricular development and revision. In addition, [EJA \(LOCAL\)](#) states that faculty members who have differences with existing or proposed policy or procedure should express these views through the standing committee structure of the College or to his/her supervising administrator. And, finally, [DI \(LOCAL\)](#) states that responsibility as a working committee member is part of the professional assignment of each instructor. These same elements are echoed in the Vernon College [Instructor job description](#) which states that the major duties and responsibilities of a full-time faculty member include *participating in program/discipline administrative and maintenance activities, communicating through appropriate channels in relating dissatisfaction or making positive suggestions and participating in policy making through service on task forces or committees as appointed or elected.**

Most of the College's decision making on academic and governance matters occur through the [Standing Committee Structure](#). In an effort to promote campus-wide participation in the decision-making processes, the College has established and utilizes a standing committee structure. This structure is designed to assist the administration to make better decisions on given academic and governance issues with the advice and input of faculty, students, and staff. Committee recommendations from the standing committees' chair are forwarded to the College President who takes final action on the recommendations or forwards the recommendation to the Board of Trustees if internal/external policy dictates. At Vernon College, all faculty and staff are given the opportunity to state an interest in a preferred committee assignment. Attempts to honor requests are made with final committee assignments approved by the President. Faculty members serve on 21 of the College's 23 Standing Committees with the only exceptions being the Social Committee and the President's Council. Of the total 393 standing committee members (duplicated count), faculty hold 31% of those positions. Five of the Standing Committees require two representatives from the Faculty Senate to be included in the committee membership; those committees include: Planning and Assessment, Academic Council, Technology Committee, Calendar Committee, and Honors Convocation. Four of the standing College committees are chaired by faculty.

Three of the more intensive ways faculty members are involved in college academic and governance matters are their service on three key standing committees: planning and assessment, student core competencies, and academic council.

Academic Council makes recommendations to the President in the following areas:

1. academic policies;
2. credit and non-credit program and course additions, deletions, and modifications;
3. college catalog changes regarding instructional programs, procedures, and policies;
4. preliminary evaluation of instructional programs and teaching disciplines;
5. teaching loads for faculty, minimum class size and under load remedies;
6. faculty work week;
7. course and degree plans as presented in the Vernon College Catalog;
8. conversion formula;
9. and lab/special fees for courses listed in the Vernon College Catalog.

With the exception of three individuals (Director of Institutional Research, Director of Counseling, Dean of Admissions/Registrar), the majority of the members serving on the eighteen member Academic Council are all members of the Division of Instructional Services. Ten of the eighteen member council are faculty (two of the ten are adjunct faculty). The remaining five members include the Dean of Instructional Services, the Associate Dean of Workforce and Continuing Education (this position also serves as a Division Chair for the Division of Workforce Education and Continuing Education), the Assistant to the Dean of Instructional Services (Curriculum Specialist), the Director of Library Services, and the Director of Continuing Education.

Faculty members may be elected or appointed to serve on the Academic Council. Two of the faculty Academic Council members are representatives elected by the Vernon College Faculty Senate. The Faculty Senate representatives are elected annually by the Senate to the Council. Faculty Senate representatives may serve multiple year terms. Four of the faculty Academic Council members were appointed to the Council due to their positions as Division Chairs (Division Chairs at Vernon College are classified as Faculty and are responsible for maintaining a reduced teaching load). The Division Chairs have tenure in their position that ranges from 2-5 years of service. One faculty Academic Council member was appointed due to her chairperson role for the Student Core Competencies Committee. Another faculty Academic Council member was appointed by virtue of her enrollment in a state leadership initiative.

Comprehensive Standard 3.4.5

The institution publishes academic policies that adhere to principles of good educational practice. These are disseminated to students, faculty, and other interested parties through publications that accurately represent the programs and services of the institution. **(Academic Policies)**

COMPLIANCE

Narrative:

Vernon College demonstrates compliance in the publication and dissemination of academic policies. The College publishes and disseminates academic policies to students through the following publications: the [Vernon College General Catalog](#), recruiting brochures, [Student Handbook](#), [Support Services for Distance Learning Students Handbook](#), [New Student Group Advising Handbook](#), program brochures, [class schedules](#), and the [College website](#). The college publishes and disseminates academic policies to faculty via the following: the Catalog, the Website, and the [Employee Handbook](#), and the [Instructor Handbook](#). Information is disseminated to other interested parties through the aforementioned publications or upon appropriate request.

The Vernon College Catalog provides students with comprehensive information concerning the mission of the College, the programs offered and the requirements for each program, student services, and regulations.

The Student Handbook contains the same information regarding academic policies as the College Catalog.

Program brochures provide information regarding specific academic and technical program offerings and are distributed to all local high schools and to places of business, as well as mailed to prospective students. The prospective student has the opportunity to return a portion of this brochure requesting further information about the college.

The Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board Lower Division Academic Course Guide Manual (ACGM) and the Workforce Education Course Manual (WECM) are disseminated to students primarily via the THECB Website. These manuals inform students about the General Education Core Curriculum Requirements and contain transfer links to all public institutions of higher education in the state.

The college publishes class schedules for each semester which include academic policies relevant to registration. All pertinent calendar dates are published also. The class schedule is disseminated to area businesses and made available at several locations on campus. The schedule is also published online.

The Vernon College website publishes general academic information, class schedules, admissions and registration information, campus news and events, and contact information.

Documentation

1. [Vernon College General Catalog](#)
2. [Vernon College Student Handbook](#)
3. [Support Services for Distance Learning Students Handbook](#)
4. [New Student Group Advising Handbook](#)
5. [Vernon College class schedule](#)
6. [Vernon College Employee Handbook](#)
7. [Vernon College Instructor Handbook](#)
8. [Vernon College website](#)

3.4.5

OFF-SITE COMMITTEE COMMENTS

Non-Compliance

VC publishes its academic policies widely in a variety of publications. However, there was no discussion or evidence presented to support whether these policies adhere to principles of good educational practice.

3.4.5

VERNON COLLEGE RESPONSE TO OFF-SITE COMMITTEE COMMENTS

Vernon College publishes academic policies that adhere to principles of good education practice. The institution feels confident in its assertion that the published academic policies adhere to principle of good education practice based upon the following evidence:

1. Vernon College complies with all standards set forth by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools/Commission on Colleges (SACS/COC).
2. Vernon College complies with all rules and regulations set forth by the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB), its state governing agency.
3. All academic policies follow an internal system of checks and balances established through the standing committee structure. Specifically, in terms of academic policies, through the Academic Council. The Academic Council includes faculty, instructional administrators, and representatives from instructional support systems of the college. It makes recommendations to the College President in the following areas: academic policy, including teaching loads for faculty, minimum class size, and faculty work week; credit program and course additions, deletions, and modifications; college catalog changes; lab/special fees; and the preliminary evaluation of instructional programs and teaching disciplines.

Comprehensive Standard 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)**

COMPLIANCE

Narrative:

Vernon College awards credit for courses in accordance with standards outlined in Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board's (THECB) *Lower Division Academic Course Guide Manual* (ACGM) and the *Workforce Education Course Manual* (WECM).

[Course credit](#) is based on the semester hour unit. Generally, a lecture course without a laboratory meets three hours each week during a sixteen (16) week semester, and a student is granted three semester hours of credit for successfully completing such a course. In most instances, a laboratory course meets three hours for lecture and three hours for laboratory each week during a sixteen (16) week semester, and a student is granted four semester hours of credit for successfully completing such a course. To ensure that classes meet the required hours, weekly contact hours increase for classes meeting in semesters of less than sixteen (16) weeks.

To guarantee compliance with the THECB's requirements, the Vernon College Academic Council [monitors](#) the educational programs and formulates recommendations regarding the establishment, deletion, and revision of curriculums.

Vernon College offers courses through traditional face-to-face, online, through the Virtual College of Texas, Interactive Television, and hybrid delivery methods. The applications of these standards apply to all course delivery formats.

Documentation

1. [Vernon College General Catalog](#)
2. [Academic Council Minutes, November 20, 2006](#)

3.4.6

OFF-SITE COMMITTEE COMMENTS

Non-Compliance

The *Compliance Certification* indicates that course credit is awarded "in accordance with standards outlined in THECB *Lower Division Academic Course Guide Manual* (ACGM) and the *Workforce Education Course Manual* (WECM)," but access to the two manuals mentioned were not supplied by Vernon College to support this statement or provide documentation for this committee. The College

supplied only the *Vernon College 2007-2008 General Catalog* and meeting minutes from one meeting of the Academic Council as documentation that the Institution awards credit in the following manner: “Course credit is based on the semester hour unit. Generally, a lecture course without a laboratory meets three hours each week during a sixteen (16) week semester, and a student is granted three semester hours of credit for successfully completing such a course.” The College’s narrative further states, and is supported by information found in the *Vernon College 2007-2008 General Catalog*, “In most instances, a laboratory course meets three hours for lecture and three hours for laboratory each week during a sixteen week semester, and a student is granted four semester hours of credit for successfully completing such a course.”

Based on the limited supportive documentation and narrative supplied by the College, no judgment can be rendered regarding the awarding of credit or the lack-there-of by the College, for experiential laboratory work, clinical practice in health programs, or work experience, such as cooperative education.

The narrative of the *Compliance Certification* also states that, “Vernon College offers courses through traditional face-to-face, online, through the Virtual College of Texas, Interactive Television, and hybrid delivery methods,” and that “the applications of these standards apply to all course delivery formats.”

Relevant documentation mentioned in the *Compliance Certification*, but not supplied, would be helpful in discerning the College’s compliance with Comprehensive Standard 3.4.6.

3.4.6

VERNON COLLEGE RESPONSE TO OFF-SITE COMMITTEE COMMENTS

The *Lower-Division Academic Course Guide Manual (ACGM)* is the official list of courses approved for general academic transfer that may be offered by public community and technical colleges in Texas for state funding. The fall 2007 edition of the *ACGM* is organized alphabetically by academic disciplines currently taught at community and technical colleges. All common courses listed in the fall 2007 *ACGM* are numbered to correspond to course numbers assigned by the Texas Common Course Numbering System (TCCNS).

Each entry in the *ACGM* begins with a list of common course prefixes and numbers; for course descriptions with no common numbers currently assigned, a content descriptor (for example, “Environmental Science”) is listed. Beneath the course list appears the following: the 10-digit approval number for the course; the matching CIP descriptor; and information about maximum semester credit hours (SCH) per student, maximum SCH per course, and maximum contact hours per course.

For example:

BIOL 1406 Biology for Science Majors I (lecture + lab)
BIOL 1306 Biology for Science Majors I (lecture)
BIOL 1106 Biology for Science Majors Laboratory I (lab)
BIOL 1407 Biology for Science Majors II (lecture + lab)
BIOL 1307 Biology for Science Majors II (lecture)
BIOL 1107 Biology for Science Majors Laboratory II (lab)

Fundamental principles of living organisms including physical and chemical properties of life, organization, function, evolutionary adaptation, and classification. Concepts of reproduction, genetics, ecology, and the scientific method are included.

Approval Number.....	26.0101.51 03
CIP Area	Life Sciences
maximum SCH per student	8
maximum SCH per course	4
maximum contact hours per course.	96

In this example, the 10-digit approval number is 26.0101.5103. The first six digits of the approval number indicate subject matter and are based upon CIP codes. The Coordinating Board staff assigns the last four digits. The 7th and 8th digits further delineate course content, sequence, or approval category. The 9th and 10th digits indicate the funding category.

26.0101 is the CIP code for General Biology. The courses are grouped by subject according to the Classification of Instructional Programs (CIP) codes published by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES).

51 is the code for the content listed in the course description. The range for these numbers is typically 51 to 59.

03 is the current state funding code for biological sciences in public community and technical colleges. These codes range from 01 to 26.

After the CIP descriptor, “General Biology,” the maximum semester credit hours (SCH) per student, semester credit hours (SCH) per course, and contact hours per course are listed:

8 is the maximum number of semester credit hours per student for courses applicable toward an associate degree under this specific approval number. In this example, a college may allow students to take eight SCH of general biology courses and count them toward an associate degree.

4 is the maximum number of semester credit hours per course under this specific approval number. A college could offer a course under this approval number for four or fewer SCH, but not more. The college should award the SCH in proportion to the number of contact hours and type of instruction under the assigned common course number.

A traditional lecture course offered for three contact hours of lecture over a 16-week semester will earn three semester credit hours and carry a “3” in the second digit of the common course number. Similarly, a traditional lecture/lab course offered for three contact hours of lecture and three contact hours of laboratory over a 16-week semester would earn four semester credit hours and carry a “4” in the second digit of the common course number. In general, one semester credit hour is awarded per one contact hour of lecture instruction and one semester credit hour is awarded per two to four contact hours of laboratory instruction.

96 is the total maximum number of total contact hours per course according to this specific approval number. Thus, a college can offer a course under the General Biology approval number for 96 or fewer contact hours, but not more. In this example, a four SCH biology course may be offered for up to a maximum 96 contact hours. During a regular 16-week semester, 96 contact hours in this particular course might be broken down into three hours of lecture per week and three hours of lab per week or into other combinations that total 96 contact hours.

The ***Guidelines for Instructional Programs in Workforce Education*** is the Coordinating Board’s official policy manual for both credit and non-credit workforce education programs offered at public higher education institutions and for applied associate degrees offered at degree-granting career schools and colleges in Texas.

The manual provides guidelines for the effective design, development, operation, and evaluation of workforce education programs, including the:

1. application process for new program approval;
2. revision processes for currently approved workforce education programs, deactivation/reactivation and closure of workforce education programs;
3. elements of applied associate degree programs in career schools and colleges; and
4. application of the state institutional effectiveness process.

Throughout the *Guidelines*, the word “must” is used to identify program requirements and the word “should” is used to identify characteristics that are strongly recommended.

The programs and awards covered in the *Guidelines* include:

1. Associate of Applied Science (AAS)/Associate of Applied Arts (AAA) degrees;
2. Certificates approved by the Coordinating Board and offered for continuing education units (CEU) or semester credit hours (SCH); and
3. Institutional certificates and marketable skills achievement awards.

The Guidelines do not apply to academic degrees and certificate programs such as the Associate of Arts (AA), Associate of Science (AS), or the academic core curriculum.

The **WECM** is a web-based inventory of current workforce education courses available for use by Texas public two-year colleges. The courses are grouped by subject according to the Classification of Instructional Programs (CIP) codes published by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES). Since 1998, other **WECM** projects have assured currency of **WECM** courses and guidelines, as well as opportunities for the professional development of college faculty and administrators. All **WECM** projects have been supported by the collective skills and talents of college administrators, instructional specialists, and business and industry representatives and have been funded through the Carl D. Perkins Act.

The purposes of the **WECM** are to:

- contribute to the quality and consistency of workforce courses;
- provide Texas colleges increased assistance and flexibility in responding to employer needs;
- enhance the portability of credits and credentials for students;
- provide increased access for students to workforce education degrees and career advancement for students;
- facilitate articulation with other providers of education at both the secondary and post-secondary levels; and
- incorporate industry-established skill standards into Texas workforce education.

The **WECM** is organized by six-digit CIP codes that represent instructional program codes, titles, and descriptions for academic and occupational programs offered at postsecondary levels. The THECB assigns CIP codes and rubrics to courses for the purpose of classifying, recording, and reporting statistics for workforce education courses. The CIP codes or rubrics are not intended to drive the choice of SCH or CEU course offerings but to serve as a guide once a college has identified the learning outcomes for a course and/or program.

- Courses with different CIP codes may be included in an approved program. The decision to use a **WECM** course should be based primarily on the intended learning outcomes of the course rather than the CIP code or rubric.
- To assure success of a workforce education course, universally accepted course design practices must be considered prior to offering a course, including: identifying qualified faculty, designating appropriate prerequisite courses (if applicable), establishing pre- and post-assessment strategies, choosing instructional delivery systems, and designing evaluation strategies.

WECM SCH and CEU courses are designed with an array of course options and are governed by consistent protocol. Courses allow flexibility for colleges in awarding certificate and degrees and in responding to the immediate needs of students, business, and industry. Both SCH and CEU courses provide an opportunity for students to obtain skills, knowledge, and behaviors needed for career exploration, entry, and specific job upgrades. An explanation of SCH and CEU course options and protocol follows:

Learning Outcomes: Learning outcomes are the distinguishing feature of each *WECM* course. Minimum learning outcomes are intended for student attainment of specific competencies and are meant to be taught and measured for the award of either SCH or CEU. Colleges must not eliminate but are encouraged to enhance or add learning outcomes. Enhancements or additions must not be so extensive that they result in a substantially different course. Local need or business/industry standards, state/national credentialing requirements, employer-defined skill requirements, national industry-defined skill requirements or standards, and/or Texas Skill Standards Board (TSSB) recognized skill standards may serve as resources for enhancement or addition of learning outcomes.

Course Description: Course descriptions provide an overview of course content or subject matter. Colleges must use the complete *WECM* course descriptions for all SCH courses and CEU “mirror” courses, but they may enhance or add to the course descriptions as long as the enhancements are consistent with *WECM*-approved learning outcomes. The enhancements must not be so extensive that they result in a substantially different course. Colleges may revise the description of a course offered only for CEU provided that the integrity and intent of the course remains intact and the description is consistent with *WECM*-approved learning outcomes.

Contact Hour Range: Each SCH course in the *WECM* has a suitable range of contact hours necessary to master minimum learning outcomes and to afford each college a choice of instructional strategies via lecture/lab components. SCH courses are assigned contact hour ranges based on the ratios outlined in Table 4-1 of this Chapter. Colleges must follow the established ratios for credit and contact hour assignments.

A CEU course with fewer than 7 contact hours of instruction will not receive state funding unless the specific type and length of instruction are required by local, state, or national licensing, certifying, regulatory, or accrediting agencies. The requirements for adding a course with fewer than 7 contact hours are discussed later in this chapter. No lecture/lab CEU course can have more than 176 contact hours. CEU external learning courses must follow the same contact hour limits as the SCH external learning courses.

Suggested Prerequisite: If instructional specialists at a *WECM* Course Review Workshop agree on a course prerequisite, a specific list of prerequisite course(s), skill(s), or knowledge is included in the description.

Course Level: The course level indicates whether the course is introductory, intermediate, or advanced, as recommended by instructional specialists. The first digit in the course number specifies the course level, as described below in the section titled “Course Rubric and Number.”

Course Title: The published *WECM* title for SCH courses must appear in college publications and on transcripts. For CEU courses, workforce marketing titles may be used to better describe the nature of the courses being offered. For CEU

courses, workforce marketing titles may be listed in transcripts. However, all CEU mirror courses must use the published *WECM* title for the course.

Course Rubric and Number: Rubrics (prefixes) provide a common set of unique course designations for each occupational discipline. Each four-letter rubric (e.g. DFTG) identifies a cluster of skills and knowledge to be used in determining both course equivalency and degree applicability for transfer on a statewide basis. Using a common rubric will enable students to link their portfolios of skill attainment to the occupational needs of business and industry. However, the rubric does not identify the only discipline eligible to use a course. Courses should be chosen based on course descriptions and learning outcomes, not on rubrics. Any program may involve courses with several different rubrics as long as the course content is appropriate.

The four-digit number after the rubric indicates the course level, the SCH and/or CEU value, the course type, and the suggested sequence.

- The **first digit** identifies course level. For SCH and CEU courses, an introductory course is denoted by a “1,” and an advanced course is denoted by a “2.” An intermediate course may be denoted with either a “1” or a “2.”
- The **second digit** defines the SCH or CEU value. For example, a “3” indicates a three SCH course and a “0” denotes a non-credit course (that is, a CEU course.) Courses must follow the established ratios discussed in Chapter Three. Approved contact hour and credit hour combinations can be found in Table 4-1 of this chapter. The number of Continuing Education Units (CEU) awarded is calculated by setting ten instructional contact hours equal to one CEU.
- The **third and fourth digits** establish the type of course and course sequence.

00-59	Lecture-Lab
60-63	Clinical
64-69	Practicum
70-79	Local Need
80-85	Cooperative Education
86-89	Internship
90-99	Special Topics

For both SCH and CEU courses, the published *WECM* rubric and number must be used in official college publications.

D. Using the *WECM*

1. Guidelines for All Course Types

WECM courses are created and maintained by teams of instructional specialists with expertise in the relevant subject areas. The specialists are selected from colleges around the state. The allotted range of contact hours and/or credit hours represents the instructional specialist teams' professional judgment about the appropriate amount of time needed to cover the minimum course outcomes.

When a *WECM* course is already available to cover specific content, the college must use the range of credit and contact hours as well as the minimum learning outcomes specified in the *WECM* course listing.

2. Special Topics Courses

Available within each six-digit CIP Code, a Special Topics course should be used only when course content does not exist in a current *WECM* course. The Special Topics course is provided for temporary use or transitional content. The college specifies discipline-specific learning outcomes for the Special Topics course. Topics may address recently identified current events, skills, and knowledge pertinent to the technical area and relevant to the occupational development of the student. Special Topics courses are identified by a "9" in the third digit of the course number. Although THECB approval is currently not required for the content of a Special Topics course, *audit penalties may apply if colleges are not very careful to include only legitimate workforce education content and avoid non-fundable community education courses*. Colleges must submit a Special Topics form through the electronic submission process prior to the end of the semester in which the course is offered.

The process for development and submission of the Special Topics SCH and CEU courses is as follows:

- Determine if there is a duplicate existing *WECM* course.
- If not, submit a Special Topics Course Form for each Special Topics course taught to the THECB. The Special Topics Course Form is located at the THECB website cited in this chapter.
- The form must clearly document the CIP code, rubric, number, subtitle, effective date, actual number of contact hours taught, type of course (SCH or CEU,) level, course description, and minimum learning outcomes. The subtitle identifies the specific course content; for example, WLDG 1391 "Alloys and Processes", or WLDG 1091 "Farm and Ranch Welding."
- A SCH Special Topics Course cannot have fewer than 16 contact hours or more than 112 contact hours. The course must follow the

established ratios for contact hour and credit hour assignments as discussed in Chapter Three. Allowable combinations have been outlined in Table 4-1 of this Chapter. A range of contact hours and lecture/lab components is specified for each SCH value.

Table 4-1. Credit/Contact Hour Combinations for SCH Special Topics Courses

COURSE RUBRIC	SCH	CONTACT HOUR RANGE PER SEMESTER	ALLOWABLE COMBINATIONS		
			Lecture /wk	Lab /wk	Contact /sem
XXXX 119X	1	16-64	0	2	32
			0	3	48
			0	4	64
			1	0	16
XXXX 129X	2	32-96	0	4	64
			0	6	96
			1	2	48
			1	3	64
			1	4	80
			2	0	32
			2	1	48
XXXX 139X	3	48-96	1	4	80
			2	2	64
			2	3	80
			2	4	96
			3	0	48
			3	1	64
XXXX 149X	4	64-112	2	4	96
			3	2	80
			3	3	96
			3	4	112
			4	0	64
			4	1	80

If a new or revised program includes a SCH Special Topics course, either as a requirement or an elective, a course form must be submitted electronically to the THECB. Colleges are limited to a combined total of three SCH Special Topics and/or SCH Local Need courses per AAS or advanced technical certificate. Additionally, colleges are limited to two Special Topics or Local

Need SCH courses per Level 2 certificate and one Special Topics or Local Need SCH course per Level 1 certificate. Exceptions to this limitation will be made only if the requesting college is able to provide a compelling justification for such a request. An example of a compelling justification is that the course addresses a new discipline not currently represented in the *WECM*.

A CEU Special Topics Course cannot have fewer than 7 contact hours or more than 112 contact hours. There is no limitation on the number of Special Topics courses that can be taught per quarter

During *WECM* course reviews, instructional specialists evaluate Special Topics courses for possible inclusion in the *WECM*. If a course is approved as an addition to the *WECM*, the instructional specialists working in conjunction with the instructional leadership and the Maintenance Project will assign the final *WECM* title, rubric, number, suitable range of contact hours, number of SCH and/or CEU, course description, and minimum learning outcomes.

- If the course is not adopted as a regular *WECM* course, the college may continue to teach the content for up to 24 months. After 24 months, a new Special Topics Form must be submitted to the THECB.

Comprehensive Standard 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)**

COMPLIANCE

Narrative:

Vernon College employs competent full-time and part-time faculty members who are qualified to accomplish the mission and goals of the College. In order to accomplish this, the College seeks the most qualified individuals to teach. All qualifications, including work and teaching experience, as well as professional certifications are considered in addition to the individual’s level of education (highest degree earned in the discipline.)

As established by College policy and written in the Vernon College Employee Handbook, all faculty must meet the [criteria](#) for scholarly and professional preparation established by the Southern Association for College and Schools. The College will only acknowledge degrees earned from regionally accredited institutions or internationally accredited foreign colleges. In addition to this, the College requires official credentials (official transcripts, and/or official certifications) and the completion of the Vernon College Faculty Credential Form.

The Vernon College Faculty Roster provides information on full-time and part-time faculty. The Vernon College Faculty Roster and Credentials are in hard copy and provided in a separate electronic format.

Documentation

1. [Faculty Criteria](#), Vernon College Employee Handbook
2. Vernon College Faculty Roster, (provided in hard copy and separate electronic format)

3.7.1

OFF-SITE COMMITTEE COMMENTS

Non-Compliance

VC states that it employs competent, dedicated faculty members qualified to accomplish the mission and goals of the institution. A review of documentation of faculty qualifications provided for the Off-Site Review Committee found that additional verification of credentials or materials is needed to ensure that all faculty are in compliance with this standard of the *Principles* – as well as the criteria established by Vernon College. See attached faculty list.

3.7.1

VERNON COLLEGE RESPONSE TO OFF-SITE COMMITTEE COMMENTS

Six faculty members were listed on the *Request for Justifying and Documenting Qualifications of Faculty*:

John Hennington
Randall Watkins
Mark Schroeder
Jill Druessedow
Janna Monday
Bristi Cure

The off-site committee cited that **John Hennington's** and **Randall Watkins'** credentials were not acceptable. Vernon College learned that Business Law courses, despite their BUSI prefix, are considered part of the law discipline and not the business discipline. Therefore; John Hennington and Randall Watkins were deemed unqualified by Vernon College to teach the BUSI 2301 Business Law course. Mr. Hennington was notified and removed as the instructor for the BUSI 2301 Business Law course scheduled for the fall 2008 semester. A review of prior course schedules indicated that Mr. Watkins' was never assigned to teach the BUSI 2301 Business Law course. A letter, signed by the Dean of Instructional Services, detailing that the instructor does not meet the academic qualifications to teach BUSI 2301 Business Law I was placed in each of the instructors' personnel files in the Human Resources Office. A copy of the letter was also sent to the Division Chair.

The off-site committee cited that the transcript on record for **Mark Schroeder** was "issued to the student". An official transcript is now on file with the Human Resources Office.

The off-site committee cited that **Jill Druessedow's** credentials were not acceptable. Please note the updated Roster of Instructional Staff documenting that Ms. Druessedow is qualified to teach college level English courses at Vernon College due to education.

The off-site committee cited that **Jana Monday's** credentials were not acceptable. Please note the updated Roster of Instructional Staff documenting that Ms. Monday is qualified to teach college level English courses at Vernon College due to education and experience.

The off-site committee cited that **Bristi Cure's** credentials were not acceptable. Vernon College reviewed Ms. Cure's credentials. Due to the fact that the prefixes on Ms. Cure's communications courses were AGRI instead of SPCH or COMM, she was deemed unqualified by Vernon College to teach SPCH 1304 Voice and Diction and SPCH 1315 Public Speaking. A letter signed by the Dean of Instructional Services detailing that the instructor does not meet the academic qualifications to teach SPCH 1304 Voice and Diction and SPCH 1315 Public Speaking was placed in the instructor's personnel files in the Human Resources Office. A copy of the letter was also sent to the Division Chair.

ALL OF THESE DOCUMENTS ARE PROVIDED TO ON-SITE COMMITTEE MEMBERS ON THE FLASH DRIVE FOR IMMEDIATE REVIEW AND A HARD COPY BY REQUEST.

Comprehensive Standard 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)**

COMPLIANCE

Narrative:

Vernon College regularly evaluates the effectiveness of each faculty member in accord with its published criteria outlined in the [Evaluation of Faculty \(Students & Supervisors\)](#) in the Employee Handbook regardless of contractual or tenured status. The purpose of the faculty evaluation procedure is to provide faculty members and Division Chair/Supervisors with an opportunity to work together to improve the quality of instruction and the educational program at Vernon College. The [Supervisor's Evaluation of Faculty](#) and the [Student Survey of Instruction](#) play a predominant role during the evaluation process for all full-time and part-time instructors. Supporting documentation (professional development activities, program/discipline evaluations, planning and evaluation outcomes, annual loads, and graduation and placement rates) is taken into consideration by the Division Chair/Supervisor during the evaluation process. All faculty, including adjunct faculty, are evaluated on an annual basis by his/her Division Chair and all evaluations are reviewed by the Dean of Instructional Services. Student Surveys of Instruction are conducted according to the following schedule:

Adjunct faculty are evaluated by each class each semester for one year of satisfactory performance, including summer if applicable, and then they follow the full-time faculty schedule. Adjunct faculty includes instructors teaching at remote sites in support of the dual credit program. New Full-Time faculty are evaluated by each class each semester for one year of satisfactory performance, including summer if applicable, and then they follow the full-time faculty schedule. All full-time faculty are evaluated annually. A random sample of full-time faculty classes (not less than 30%) are evaluated in the fall and spring semesters annually. If a faculty member's performance is deemed unsatisfactory, then that faculty member will automatically be evaluated the following semester. In addition, students will evaluate all Internet courses offered each semester regardless of the status of the instructor. The procedures followed for on site courses are utilized in the ITV course evaluation process.

Division Chair/Supervisors evaluate faculty members based on the annual faculty evaluation schedule developed by the Dean of Instructional Services. The Division Chair/Supervisor schedules a conference with the instructor in order to complete the evaluation. The evaluator reviews the following materials before the evaluation session: Student surveys, instructor's professional development activities, program discipline evaluation, program/discipline planning and evaluation process, enrollments, and graduation and placement rates. If the evaluator believes that a classroom observation is necessary, he/she may conduct it at any time without prior notification to the faculty member. Following completion of the evaluator/instructor conference, the evaluator will

provide a copy of the evaluation to the instructor and forward the original to the Dean of Instructional Services for review. Once approved by the dean, the evaluation will be forwarded to the Human Resources Office.

Documentation

1. [Evaluation of Faculty \(Students & Supervisors\)](#), Vernon College Employee Handbook
2. [Supervisor's Evaluation of Faculty](#), Vernon College Instructor Handbook
3. [Student Survey of Instruction](#), Vernon College Instructor Handbook

3.7.2

OFF-SITE COMMITTEE COMMENTS

Non-Compliance

The institution publishes its Evaluation of Faculty policy and procedure on page 59 of the *Vernon College Employee Handbook*. According to this procedure, each instructor, whether full-time or part-time, is to be evaluated annually by the instructor's division chair and by the instructor's students. The evaluations are to be reviewed by the Dean of Instructional Services. A schedule for the student evaluations is provided. The institution has provided blank evaluation forms to be used by the supervisor and by the students. However, no examples of completed forms are presented as evidence that the institution has actually performed these evaluations.

3.7.2

VERNON COLLEGE RESPONSE TO OFF-SITE COMMITTEE COMMENTS

Vernon College regularly evaluates the effectiveness of each faculty member in accord with published criteria, regardless of contractual or tenured status. A review of the personnel files indicates that 100% of the full-time faculty employed during the 2007-2008 school year were evaluated by the instructor's Division Chair and by the instructor's students. The *Supervisor's Evaluation of Instructor* forms, upon completion, were reviewed and signed by the Dean of Instructional Services. A review of the personnel files indicate that Student Evaluation forms are complete and present for 100% of adjunct faculty while Supervisor's Evaluation forms are complete and present for over 90% of adjunct faculty. The *Supervisor's Evaluation of Instructor* forms, upon completion, were reviewed and signed by the Dean of Instructional Services. The *Supervisor's Evaluation of Instructor* forms require the supervisor/division chair to review the *Student Survey of Instruction* as part of the formal evaluation process. Examples of completed *Supervisor's Evaluation of Instructor* forms are attached. The samples include [full-time](#) and [adjunct](#) instructors. All completed faculty evaluation forms are housed in the Human Resources Office.

Comprehensive Standard 3.9.2

The institution protects the security, confidentiality, and integrity of its student records.
(Student Records)

COMPLIANCE

Narrative:

Vernon College demonstrates compliance in protecting the security, confidentiality, integrity, and preservation of student records. Student record access is strictly governed by the [Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974 \(FERPA\)](#). This policy limits the release of student educational records to directory information specifically set forth in the policy. Students are allowed to opt out of these releases upon written request. Each Vernon College department under the direction of the appropriate dean is responsible for training employees on the correct and lawful verbal and written release of student information as well as the security of documents both paper and electronic. The institution makes every effort to inform all employees of these regulations and provide an annual review to employees to ensure that student records and information are kept secure and confidential.

In accordance with Vernon College Board Policy Manual, [Section FJ Legal](#), both students and the community are informed of the policies and procedures governing student records through the FERPA information printed annually in the Vernon College [General Catalog](#) and the Vernon College [Student Handbook](#). This information is also available [online](#) via the Vernon College website.

The Dean of Admissions and Financial Aid/Registrar is custodian of all student records for currently enrolled students and for all official academic records. The Dean of Instructional Services is custodian of academic status records. The Dean of Students is custodian of all other records.

In the Student Services Division, student records are kept by the Dean of Student Services/Athletic Director, in the Testing Centers, Student Housing Office, Health Clinic, and in the Counseling Offices. These records include disciplinary files, student grievances, test scores, advising note information, counseling notes, housing documentation, health clinic medical records, and placement and interest inventory data. The information is kept in locked file cabinets behind locked office doors. Only select Student Services employees have access to these files.

All staff members of the Office of Admissions and Records and the Financial Aid Office, including work study students, are required to sign a [Vernon College Acceptance of Responsibility FERPA form](#) before employment in those offices. The College does not provide access to any student records without the written consent of the student or qualified individual, as defined in Vernon College Board Policy Manual, [Section FJ Legal](#) and [Section FJ Local](#).

Paper copies of older permanent student records, such as transcripts, are stored in a fire-proof, environmentally controlled vault. These include records which were created prior to computerization of records and require special care. Paper documents received currently exist in electronic format on the institution's electronic imaging system from the time of entry until the retention period ends. These represent student documents used for data entry into the college's student information system. Backups of paper and electronic student records are either maintained on microfilm or stored on computer servers (Vernon College Board Policy Manual, [Section CIA Legal](#)). All computer servers, including those with student records, are backed up on a weekly basis. These backups are then stored in the College vault. Additionally, on a weekly basis, the most recent backup is taken off campus by the Director of Information Technology for storage in a fire proof cabinet. Finally, on a biweekly basis, the most recent backups are stored off campus at the Waggoner National Bank in a safe deposit box.

Vernon College has in place extensive security measures to ensure that unauthorized persons cannot view student records through the college's computer servers. The only access to information in these computer servers is through authorized user identifications and passwords. Password security to computer servers is maintained by the college's Information Technology (IT) Department.

The Information Technology (IT) Department and computer servers are located within a restricted access area in the network room of the Osborne Administration Building on the Vernon campus. Keys to this area are not a part of any master key program and are limited to IT staff and the Dean of Administrative Services. In addition, one key is maintained in a locked cabinet for emergency access by maintenance staff.

The Texas State Library and Archives Commission require Record Control Schedules which govern the retention period for each student record. Original or copied paper student records that are eligible to be destroyed are secured and shredded by appropriate VC staff.

Documentation

1. [Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974 \(FERPA\)](#)
2. [Vernon College Acceptance of Responsibility FERPA form](#)
3. Vernon College Board Policy Manual, [Section FJ Legal](#)
4. Vernon College Board Policy Manual, [Section FJ Local](#)
5. Vernon College Board Policy Manual, [Section CIA Legal](#)
6. [Vernon College General Catalog](#)
7. [Vernon College Student Handbook](#)
8. [FERPA](#), Vernon College Website

3.9.2

OFF-SITE COMMITTEE COMMENTS

Non-Compliance

The institution protects the security, confidentiality and integrity of its student records as evidenced by the use of FERPA in granting access to records, use of electronic servers, imaging, microfilm, and other archival processes to maintain its records and to address the storage, retention and disposal of records. Because records are stored in several locations, a more detailed plan to further secure access to and disaster management of records should be available. However, the institution did not provide clear evidence of appropriate planning and management of records stored in multiple locations.

3.9.2

VERNON COLLEGE RESPONSE TO OFF-SITE COMMITTEE COMMENTS

In response to the comments of the Off-Site Committee, Vernon College has inserted in the *Vernon College Employee Handbook 2007-08*, [Section G](#), a more detailed security and disaster management plan for student records. These revised procedures go into effect immediately due to approval of the College's President's Council. The additions clarify the responsibility of each record custodian to secure access, maintain confidentiality and protect the integrity of all student records regardless of campus or center location.

The location of each type of student record has also been noted in *Vernon College Employee Handbook 2007-08*, [Section G](#), clarifying responsibility and location of each type of student record. A disaster management plan for student records has also been detailed. This plan would enable the College to be operational within a short period of time for student record services, should a disaster occur.

Additionally, the College continues to migrate paper records of all types to its electronic imaging system to minimize the existence of paper documents and safeguard against the loss of these records by disaster. The use of electronic imaging also allows access by approved personnel from any Vernon College location. Until the imaging of documents is complete, these paper files are stored in locked fire proof file cabinets behind locked doors. Access is controlled at each Vernon College location through a limited key program.