



Core to College Interim Grant Report

November 1, 2013

Interim Report – Year 2

I. Narrative

Achievements: Describe your progress against the overall grant objectives and the objectives in your proposal. What have you achieved?

The Tennessee Core to College grant has focused on successfully executing two projects: General Education Redesign and P-16 Curriculum Councils. Both of these projects were developed with specific, measurable outcomes and timelines that allow for a clear assessment regarding program progress and delivery. In both instances, the Tennessee Core to College projects are making steady progress towards fulfilling the plenary goals established within the grant as outlined below. You can find supplemental information at our Core to College [website](#).

1) General Education Redesign-

With the support of the Tennessee Board of Regents and University of Tennessee, the Alignment Director formed faculty redesign teams to assess and align the K-12 Common Core State Standards to credit bearing, entry level courses in English and Math to create a more seamless transition from high school to college for Tennessee students. Each team consists of three primary members. Additionally, external evaluators from each institution and governing board have been given regular opportunities for feedback to ensure the work is reflective of the entire state.

The General Education Redesign project follows an ambitious timeline focused on convening key higher education faculty members in math and English/Language Arts to assess the gaps between current entry-level college courses and the preparation level of high school graduates based on the Common Core. Below, please find the initial grant plan for this project, as well as the completion status for each task:

February 2013 - Selection and Recruitment of Faculty Project Team (Complete)

A six member faculty team was selected, primarily from the core group of faculty that have previously served as PARCC item reviewers or providers of CCSS Professional Development.

March 2013- Initial meeting; review of CCSS (led by content expert in each field); syllabus review of current courses; identification of key differences. Follow up project: content teams build outline for CCSS aligned course. (Complete)

The initial general education redesign meeting was held in April 2013, with all faculty team members in attendance. Additional content-specific support was provided by staff from Achieve, Inc. This convening focused on identifying the key shifts of the Common Core State Standards and how those shifts may affect general education college curricula for English/Language Arts and Math. Perhaps most importantly, this meeting provided the guidance and structural framework for the work that would unfold over the ensuing six months. A summary of activities for each respective content area can be located on the redesign [website](#).

English/Language Arts:

- After a thoughtful discussion of the Key Shifts, the team developed a series of questions and potential challenges in both developing and communicating the model curriculum with their colleagues.
- The team discussed the content concepts in college coursework aligned with the CCSS and identified the following areas of existing alignment in the literacy and writing standards:
 - Focus on purpose and audience, particularly in writing

Core to College

- Function of genre and mode
- Extended writing pieces (this is currently happening in universities but not community colleges, based on experience of committee members)
- The team outlined a plan of action spanning the next year towards the development of the materials required to complete the redesign.
- Prior to a convening in November, the team agreed to meet twice for interim work sessions to ensure accountability.

Math:

- The team reviewed sample items from PARCC, acknowledging great appreciation for “messiness” in item answers (e.g. non-integers) that reflect the shift to “real world” problems in which data sets are not always clean.
- After a discussion of the Key Shifts, team agreed that CCSS will change what can be done in the college algebra classroom, allowing faculty to teach new math content instead of focusing on the mechanics. One team member noted that this will resonate not just with intro math faculty but with the divisions they serve who want to start making content connections to other STEM subjects.
- PARCC college ready students will be advanced beyond current college-level students which will require a deeper level of teaching at the college level.
- The team decided to focus on College Algebra for its model course design with a plan to revisit Introductory Statistics as future redesign possibility.
- The team decided to organize outline/syllabus according to Mathematical Association of America (MAA) recommendations. They will articulate which topics to keep with depth, which ones to remove, and which ones to add from CCSS.

September 2013 - Review aligned course plan outlines. Determine necessary texts and critical competencies. Begin building in full content and plan student outcomes for each unit.

Develop sample assignments. (Complete)

The September 2013 meeting focused primarily on assessing what progress had been made since the previous meeting, completing operational tasks relative to module development, and ensuring that a viable timeline is in place to guide work throughout the remainder of 2013.

English/Language Arts:

- Finalized learning outcomes for CCSS aligned version of English 1010: Expository Writing.
- Developed outline of modules for CCSS aligned version of English 1010.
- Continued development of annotated syllabus
- Plans for Next Steps:
 - By November 1st:
 - Finish the development of the English 1010 modules.
 - Finalize the sections of the English 1010 Course Profile.
 - Obtain feedback from Wendi Anderson at Achieve on all documents.
 - Distribute English materials to external evaluators for review.
 - November 25th:
 - Revise materials based on feedback from evaluators.
 - Finalize selection of Pilot sites and plan training for faculty.
 - Spring 2014:
 - Pilot English 1010

Core to College

Math:

- Reviewed syllabus/course profile for College Algebra.
- Reviewed math tasks.
- Determined next steps.
 - October:
 - Present current tasks/syllabus structure at the Tennessee Mathematics Teachers Association annual conference to collect feedback on process and products.
 - November:
 - Editing/finalizing syllabus and instructional tasks with “coversheet” based on feedback from Achieve, Inc.
 - Share revised versions at Tennessee Chairs of the Colleges of Mathematics (TCCM) meeting (external evaluators).
 - December:
 - Edit syllabus and instructional tasks based on feedback from TCCM meeting in November
 - Identify and train faculty willing to pilot tasks during the spring semester.
 - January:
 - Pilot tasks/syllabus
 - Develop feedback tool for the piloted tasks.

2) P-16 Curriculum Councils –

Our original grant proposal describes the convening of three Core to College Institutes that would allow for an opportunity to engage both K-12 and higher education faculty in meaningful discussion around Common Core implementation. However, upon completing a statewide listening tour, it became apparent to the Alignment Director that in order to have a more tailored approach and include more voices in the conversation, it would be more beneficial to create more sustainable, regional curriculum councils to address the areas of need experienced by both K-12 and higher education leaders. Instead of a one-time convening of the three grand divisions across the state, the Alignment Director formed eight regional councils in partnership with the Tennessee Department of Education (TDOE) that will convene regularly as an embedded practice. Additionally, partnering with the TDOE Centers of Regional Excellence allows this work to be grounded in a more permanent structure than a typical grant funded project, ensuring more sustainability of the newly formed partnerships over time.

The series of regional council meetings began on September 30th and concluded on October 21st. Each of these meetings was attended by a combination of faculty and administrators from K-12 districts, private and public institutions of higher education, and state governing agencies. Each initial council meeting followed the same agenda, but the guiding emphasis for each event was designed based on the will and needs of the regions to take precedence, so the outcomes for each council meeting was different. Ultimately, each council identified a Common Core related area/project to complete together as a P-16 unit, determined actions steps towards achieving the goals of that project, set a time frame for project completion, and identified future stakeholders required for the work to be completed. Examples of council projects include: development of a regional handbook for student teaching experiences to ensure inclusion of all stakeholders, focused work on reading instruction alignment that spans the spectrum of pre-K to the work force, hosting of a summer PARCC session aimed at all regional stakeholders, and conducting a regional skills gap analysis between K-12 preparation and higher education expectations. You may find additional information on the regional councils on our council [websites](#).

Core to College

Challenges: Please describe any challenges that you have encountered, and summarize the steps you took to address or mitigate them.

- “Initiative fatigue”
 - Many K-12 faculty members have become weary with the number of initiatives and programs they are being requested to embed into their districts. To mitigate that fatigue, we have emphasized how these partnerships will benefit the districts through data-based discussion about the needs in their own school community during our P-16 curriculum councils.
- Lack of understanding by higher education of CCSS impact
 - While Colleges of Education are more informed about CCSS, it has become apparent that general education faculty is not. Understanding of and support for CCSS will be necessary for the successful partnering of K-12 and higher education, as well as the incorporation of the curriculum redesign efforts into regular practice. To address the lack of understanding, we have emphasized the development of communication pathways into both projects.

Organizational Changes: Describe any changes within your organization or outside your organization that have an impact on the work supported by the grant? Describe how you have responded or plan to respond to these changes.

- Governor Haslam has taken on an initiative called “Drive to 55” that emphasizes the need for postsecondary attainment. As a state, our adult population currently has a 32 percent postsecondary attainment rate. The state’s goal is 55 percent of Tennesseans to have postsecondary certification by the year 2025 in order to fill future job needs. This endeavor has aided our efforts by helping to frame the “why” with data. We have incorporated the Governor’s messages into all aspects of our work.
- Tennessee has faced some challenges with CCSS opponents speaking out against their adoption. We have coordinated with other education policy agencies to communicate positive messages in support of the CCSS. To mitigate the backlash, the Alignment Director has been aggressive in forming partnerships with the Tennessee Department of Education and Tennessee State Collaborative on Reforming Education (SCORE) towards the development of communications materials around the Common Core. Specifically, the Alignment Director has presented at a number of conferences and worked with a high school student to write and attempt publishing an op-ed expressing his support for the Common Core State Standards.

Lessons Learned: What lessons have you learned that will help you to achieve your intended results moving forward? Describe any changes or new best practices you have identified or benefitted from.

- Collaboration is the key to success. We have gained enormous insight and knowledge from talks with experts in K-12, higher education, and public service organizations. Developing feedback loops encourages support and improves both process and products.
- Using data garners “buy-in” from stakeholders. We do not currently have a longitudinal data system in our state, but we have been able to gather multiple data points that have fueled the burgeoning relationships between K-12 and higher education faculty.

Core to College

Year 3 Forecasted Activities

II. Narrative

Please answer the questions below and submit with the signed report cover sheet and Year 2 responses.

Statewide Definition of College Readiness: How will you know whether your state's definition is having its intended impact? What indicators or measures will you use?

Tennessee has taken a quantitative approach to defining College and Career Readiness by using agreed upon cut scores for both the ACT and PARCC assessments to determine college acceptance and course placement. Our state's higher education institutions are directed by two governing boards: the Tennessee Board of Regents (TBR) and the University of Tennessee (UT). TBR consists of 19 institutions and jointly defines college readiness for course placement, while UT consists of three institutions all of which determine their own definition.

You can find the current policies for our higher education governing boards here:

TBR: <http://www.tbr.edu/policies/default.aspx?id=6746>

UT Knoxville: <http://www.math.utk.edu/ugrad/placement.html> ; <http://english.utk.edu/satisfying-the-first-year-requirement/>

UT Chattanooga: http://www.utc.edu/Academic/DevelopmentalMath/Math_Placement.php and <http://www.utc.edu/Academic/Mathematics/program/placementcriteria.php>
<http://www.utc.edu/Academic/EnglishComposition/>

UT Martin: <http://catalog.utm.edu/content.php?catoid=7&navoid=369>

In addition, both governing boards signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) in 2009 stating that they will accept the 11th grade English III and Algebra II PARCC assessments to determine admission to entry-level, credit-bearing courses starting in 2014-2015.

Because Tennessee had a more quantitative definition of College and Career readiness already in place, we did not request funding to specifically support any work towards its further development. However, we have had a focus on defining college and career readiness among our faculty redesign teams and regional curriculum councils to enrich the conversations to date. As we move forward it will be critical to ensure that the discussions and considerations from the conversations are continuously noted and shared with all stakeholders.

Do you foresee altering your definition based on PARCC's definition of college readiness (through its policy claims and college-ready determinations in ELA and math)? If so, how?

As the cut scores are determined by PARCC, we will continue our conversations between policy entities (Tennessee Department of Education, State Board of Education, Tennessee Higher Education Commission, Tennessee Board of Regents, and University of Tennessee) to identify the constellation of assessments and their comparability in our continued use of a quantitative definition to determine College and Career Readiness.

Core to College

How do you plan to prepare stakeholders for this change?

Again, defining College and Career Readiness falls outside of the scope of our grant proposal, so we will not lead any changes in this area, but we will continue to be a part of the conversation. Our curriculum councils have made tremendous progress in bringing the right people to the table around critical issues in postsecondary attainment. We keep our stakeholders updated through a quarterly newsletter and websites devoted to each council.

What implications, if any, do you think the change will have on general K-12 and higher education alignment issues?

We have not changed our definition of College and Career Readiness.

Postsecondary Use of Assessments: What policy, regulatory, or statutory steps has your state taken (or will take in 2014 or beyond) to achieve statewide adoption (or substantial adoption) of the PARCC high school assessments as factors in the determination of a student's readiness for first-year, entry-level, credit-bearing postsecondary courses? If you foresee challenges or barriers in this work, please describe them and possible solutions.

Both governing boards signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) in 2009 stating that they will accept the 11th grade English III and Algebra II PARCC assessments to determine admission to entry-level, credit-bearing courses starting in 2014-2015.

Additionally, we invited representatives from each governing board to attend the PARCC Postsecondary Convening in New Orleans July 2013. At this convening, we worked together to create a timeline for implementation of the use of the PARCC assessment for placement into entry-level, credit-bearing courses. This was a critical conversation because we began to set in place concrete, technical steps that will be required as we move forward and reengaged the high level stakeholders required to ensure success.

If your state has taken no concrete steps (or does not plan to take them yet), how will your state instead lay the groundwork in 2014 or beyond for the use of the PARCC high school assessments as factors in the determination of a student's readiness for first-year, entry-level, credit-bearing postsecondary courses? In other words, short of passing policies, regulations, or statutes, are there other ways your state will get ready to use PARCC as a determinant of first-year course-taking? If you foresee challenges or barriers in this work, please describe them and possible solutions.

N/A

Core to College

Thinking about your answers above, how specifically will you use your Core to College funds in 2014 to help prepare your state for the use of the PARCC assessments (e.g., their arrival, their use in placement, etc.?) Please provide examples (e.g., presentations to faculty, P-20 partnerships, etc.)

While we have made significant gains in educating our K-12 teachers and College of Education faculty on Common Core State Standards and PARCC, we still have much work to do with General Education faculty. We have partnered with multiple stakeholders in the engagement of our curriculum redesign faculty teams and P-16 curriculum councils towards the engagement and education of core higher education faculty and administrators in the reform sweeping our K-12 systems.

In the next year, we plan to take the following steps within each of our two key projects towards preparing our state for the use of the PARCC assessments:

General Education Redesign:

- Pilot College Algebra and English 1010 materials in spring 2014.
- Revise College Algebra and English 1010 materials in summer 2014.
- Plan professional development for Math and ELA faculty in summer 2014.
 - i. The professional development sessions will include training on the Common Core State Standards and the PARCC assessment. This will be one of the first opportunities for the state to engage in targeted training for general education on the Common Core State Standards.
- Provide professional development for Math and ELA faculty in fall 2014.

P-16 Curriculum Councils:

- Provide regular updates on the PARCC assessment on our website and in our quarterly newsletters.
- Set aside time during each regional curriculum council meeting for updates and discussion around PARCC implementation, specifically addressing K-12 and higher education's concerns about readiness.
- Provide resources as needed to our curriculum council partners.

General K-12 and Postsecondary Alignment: What are your plans for fostering greater K-12 and postsecondary alignment on CCSS issues in your state in 2014? What specific projects/initiatives will you undertake or complete? (Examples include: updating of first-year course syllabi in postsecondary courses; changes to teacher preparation content; involvement of higher education in district-level planning and PD; adoption of transition courses; reform of developmental education approaches.) If you foresee challenges or barriers in this work, please describe them and possible solutions.

K-12 and postsecondary alignment is the majority of what our work focuses on in Tennessee. The plans for continued alignment for the two major initiatives are outlined below:

Core to College

General Education Redesign:

Much of what we have discovered about Tennessee in the past year is that we are all receptive to change if we can ensure that it will mean success for our students. Our General Education Redesign project has kept student success at the forefront of our minds as we have developed materials aligned with both the Common Core State Standards and the current learning outcomes for entry-level, credit-bearing courses in English and Math. Critical to the development of materials will be their piloting this spring by faculty members.

We have secured a number of faculty members in both English and Math to get trained to use the materials in their courses this spring as we finalize what an aligned course looks like. Successful implementation and evaluative feedback will be necessary for gaining buy-in during our roll out of professional development over the final year of the grant.

It has been a priority to remain transparent in our efforts, gathering feedback from external evaluators every step of the way to ensure the development of resources that will actually be used. We will include full descriptions of the feedback process, including the pilots, in our professional development sessions for faculty.

The professional development sessions do present a challenge to plan because we have learned that a large percentage of the entry-level, credit-bearing courses for English and Math are taught through dual-enrollment and/or by adjunct faculty.

Teachers of dual-enrollment are typically high school teachers hired by the school district, making it challenging to identify a forum for providing these resources. Adjunct faculty are part-time and not required to attend professional development, so it can be difficult to secure their participation.

To address these challenges, we have adopted the stance of transformational professional development. We will not roll this out as mandated or required. Rather, we hope to get early adopters into our fall training and use their experience and excitement to get more to attend our spring training sessions as they share their positive experiences. Additionally, we are considering various formats for the professional development. Due to time and space constraints, we are considering the use of a combination of in-house professional development and webinars. Finally, we plan to utilize the curriculum councils to assist in mitigating any communication pathway challenges.

P-16 Curriculum Councils:

Our P-16 curriculum councils have only just started after a very targeted planning period during which stakeholders were identified. Our partnership with the Centers of Regional Excellence has proven extremely valuable in helping to demonstrate what a model K-12 and higher education partnership looks like for our council members.

The meetings to date have centered on developing rapport between our council members while focusing on specific and measurable outcomes. Many P-16 efforts in our state have fizzled over the years. In the development of our councils, we have inventoried the reasons for the failure of the other efforts in order to avoid the same pitfalls. Because our councils exist statewide and are housed within a partnership between Centers of Regional Excellence and the Tennessee Higher Education Commission, we should not have challenges of personnel turnover that result in a lapse of meetings. Additionally, we have focused on the development of a specific project with measurable outcomes for each council so there is a purpose of our convenings beyond mere semi-annual updates. We have had excited reception from our stakeholders about this design.

Core to College

What concrete outcomes of the K-12 and postsecondary alignment work are you aiming for in 2014?

General Education Redesign:

- At least one professor at each public institution of higher education will pilot and evaluate materials for redesigned College Algebra.
- At least one professor at each public institution of higher education will pilot and evaluate materials for redesigned English 1010.
- Develop a website to house all redesign products/resources.
- At least five professors at each institution of public education will complete professional development on course redesign content.
- Utilize the regional curriculum councils to communicate about the resources through regular updates.

P-16 Curriculum Councils:

The following Curriculum Council goals were developed in fall 2013 by participants in each of the eight regions.

- Northwest:
 - Improve communication between K-12 districts, postsecondary institutions, and state agencies.
 - Regular convening of K12/Higher Ed to engage in collaborative, topical discussions (January 2014; Summer, 2014; October, 2014)
 - Develop a website/listserv to connect K-12 and higher education on existing opportunities within our region.
 - Form Curriculum Alignment Content Teams focused on skills gap assessment and alignment of rigor expectations through the sharing of syllabi/units of study.
- Southwest:
 - Improve communication between K-12 districts, postsecondary institutions, and state agencies.
 - Convene as a council to continue conversation about collaboration on implementation and needs (February, 2014; October 2014)
 - Develop a website/listserv to connect K-12 and higher education on existing opportunities within our region.
 - Align Reading Instruction in the Region/State
 - Complete a crosswalk between current reading trainings and reading methods courses.
 - Produce a joint statement on best practices in reading education.
 - Develop a reading practices rubric aligned to various teacher evaluation rubrics.
 - Prepare for PARCC Implementation
 - Host July 2014 PARCC Preparation Summit
- Mid Cumberland:
 - Offer Common Core professional development to general education faculty from higher education.
 - Regular convening of K12/Higher Education to engage in collaborative, topical discussions (February, 2014; October 2014)

Core to College

- Conduct professional development around formative assessment item bank creation aligned to Common Core for K-12 and colleges of education.
- South Central:
 - Improve communication between K-12 districts, postsecondary institutions, and state agencies.
 - Annual convening of K12/Higher Education to engage in collaborative, topical discussions (October 2014)
 - Develop a website/listserv to connect K-12 and higher education on existing opportunities within our region.
 - Improve existing policy and practice for student teaching in order to ensure the comfort and input from all stakeholders.
 - Better utilize higher education faculty as content resources for K-12 teachers by developing a directory of available content specialists.
- Upper Cumberland:
 - Improve communication between K-12 districts, postsecondary institutions, and state agencies.
 - Regular convening of K12/Higher Education to engage in collaborative, topical discussions (February 2014; October 2014)
 - Develop a website/listserv to connect K-12 and higher education on existing opportunities within our region.
 - Revive and expand the Upper Cumberland Teachers Council
- Big South Fork:
 - Improve relations/communications between colleges of education and K-12 teachers.
 - Develop repository for Common Core aligned unit plans.
 - Host teacher symposium (February, 2014)
- Northeast:
 - Improve communication between K-12 districts, postsecondary institutions, and state agencies.
 - Regular convening of K12/Higher Education to engage in collaborative, topical discussions
 - Develop a website/listserv to connect K-12 and higher education on existing opportunities within our region.
 - Form Curriculum Alignment Content Teams focused on Interdisciplinary Writing and Math Instruction through the sharing of syllabi/units of study.
- Southeast:
 - Bi-annual convening of K12/Higher Education to engage in collaborative, topical discussions
 - February 2014 Convening: Topic: 21st Century/Study Skills Alignment
 - October 2014 Convening: Topic: Postsecondary Attainment
 - Develop a website/listserv to connect K-12 and higher education on existing opportunities within our region.