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Texas Association of Community Colleges

TACC eLearning Council Summer Meeting

June 25-26, 2009

Virtual College of Texas Meeting Report

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Attending:

Lee Sloan (chair)	Dani Day	Patricia McKenzie	<i>Guests:</i>
Julia Briggs	Kevin Eason	Charleen Worsham	Laura Hodges (TxVSN)
Amy Burchett	Lance Zimmerman	Jim Picquet	Lisa Brown (STARLINK)
Dennis Brown	Kirk White	Henry Hartman	Kathy McFatter ’’
Ann Morris	Robert Bermea	Ron Thomson	Belinda Benson ’’
Dwight Chaney	Steve Levey		

Recognition of eLearning Council Members with Expiring Terms of Service

The following members were recognized for completing their terms of service on the Council: Dwight Chaney and Ann Morris (East Region), Debra Rockefeller (Southeast Region) and Kirk White (Texas Association of Continuing Education). Dwight and Ann completed two consecutive terms on the Council.

eLearning Council Bylaws

The Council revised and updated the original bylaws in respect to: the Council’s purpose relative to the Virtual College of Texas and STARLINK, duties of members, representation on the Council, the official starting point for Council members’ and officers’ terms of service, the process for filling regional positions, and the duties of Council Officers. Revised bylaws are included on pages 7-8.

Revised Coordinating Board Distance Learning Policy

Kevin Eason reported on a revision of *Coordinating Board Rules Chapter 4, Subchapter E. Approval of Distance Education Courses and Programs for Public Institutions*. This subchapter, which formerly addressed distance education, off-campus, and extensions courses and programs, now addresses only distance education. Off-campus and extension courses and programs are addressed in Subchapter M in the revision. Kevin, chair of the committee responsible for the revision, invited all Council members to review and comment on the revised Subchapter E.

VCT Status Report

Texas A&M – It is exploring the possibility of implementing the Host-Provider Model within the A&M system. Ron Thomson will meet with a group of A&M administrators on July 27 to discuss Host-Provider processes and practices.

Student testimonies – Motivated by a student’s unsolicited praise of VCT, Ron proposed that student testimonies regarding their experiences with VCT have never been collected. The Council concurred that such testimonies would be useful institutional effectiveness data. **Recommendation:** At the end of each semester, the Director of VCT should send to each student an email requesting that they share why they used VCT, how it helped them with their educational plans, and suggestions for improving VCT

processes. The director's email will ask students' permission to post their responses at the VCT website, and it will note that comments related to specific professors will not be included in online postings.

VCT Trends

Enrollments, Courses, College Participation - See graphs on report page 9.

Courses with all spaces filled Spring 2009 – A report generated from VCT's website database identified Spring 2009 courses in which all available spaces were taken. The purpose of the report was to determine which courses are in high demand and may warrant additional sections. **Recommendation:** Continue to produce the report each semester. Include, additionally, the number of seats designated for VCT in each course left with zero remaining spaces.

Demographic Data - Reviewing VCT's report data, the Council proposed that demographic data on students enrolled through VCT would be useful. **Recommendation:** In the process of reserving spaces in courses, Coordinators should enter the demographic data collected in the Texas Common Application form.

Continuing Education - CE enrollments increased from 99 in FY 2008 to 157 in FY 2009. Host colleges increased from 10 to 11. Providers remained constant at 2: Austin Community College, offering Nursing Re-entry, and Galveston College, offering real estate courses. Ron noted that he has ceased being assertive in trying to increase CE's participation in VCT.

FY 2008 Institutional Evaluation of VCT (formerly "Coordinators' Evaluation of VCT") - The evaluation was favorably consistent with the evaluations of years past. Overall evaluation of VCT for FY 2008 was 5.65 on a six-point scale. The full report may be reviewed here:

<http://www.vct.org/PDFdocs/CoordEvalFY08.pdf>.

Spring 2009 Evaluation of Instruction and Services

Students' evaluation of instruction and services for courses offered through VCT appear to be consistent with previous evaluations. It has been observed that the evaluations are comparable to, or perhaps slightly higher, than colleges' locally administered evaluations. **Recommendation:** Council members agreed that to increase evaluation response rate the VCT Director should send an email to students requesting their participation prior to the evaluation cutoff date.

VCT Website - The password administration system has been revised to make it easier to use and to associate a specific name with each username and password.

Single-concept modules (Innovations in Distance Learning) - Sixteen online modules on discrete distance learning topics, jointly funded by VCT and TxPOD, will be completed by the end of the summer. They will be accessible at the website of the Texas Network for Teaching Excellence in Career and Technical Education

Lonestar Educational and Academic Resources Network (LEARN) – Community colleges' use of LEARN continues to grow, and it remains the best possibility for realizing a statewide, high-speed data network. The Council unanimously concurred that VCT should continue to pay the annual \$20,000 fee for a community college position on the LEARN board. **Recommendation:** Schedule an audioconference for an in-depth update on LEARN or put it on the agenda for the fall eLearning Council meeting.

Faculty Credentials - Some faculty credentials submitted for uploading into the Fortis electronic document system are not official college transcripts, sometimes prominently displaying "Copy" or

“Issued to student.” **Recommendation:** The VCT Director should notify via email the VCT Credentials Administrator of the college submitting the transcript. The email should state that the transcript will be uploaded into the Fortis system unless the college responds within two weeks that *official* transcripts will be provided. The email sent by the VCT Director will note that only official transcripts meet SACS standards. The intent of this action is to provide a service by informing colleges of a potential SACS violation, not to present VCT as an enforcement body.

VCT FY 2009 Strategic Plan Summary

In FY 2009, VCT focused primarily on three initiatives: the TACC Student Success Initiative, dual credit, and raising VCT’s profile with the Texas Association of Community Colleges and among college administrators.

Texas Association of Community College (TACC) Student Success Initiative

The TACC Student Success Initiative, as conceived in FY 2009, consists of three major components: collaborative licenses for web-based services supportive of instruction and student support services; a state master science course; and collaborative degree and certificate programs.

Collaborative licenses for web-based services:

READI - Purchased in FY 2008, READI’s use by colleges continued to grow through FY 2009, following a slow start in FY 2008.

SoftChalk - Purchased Fall 2008, SoftChalk seems to have been accepted by colleges in its first year at a faster pace than READI. Colleges commonly report that instructors who have used SoftChalk like it. Three in-person training sessions were held in FY 2008.

Digital Resource Repository (DRR) - The DRR is taking off slowly. Colleges are aware of it, but interest in implementing it lags behind interest in implementing SoftChalk. It is not unusual, it has been observed, for Learning Object Repositories to catch on slowly with faculty.

Course Analysis, Review, and Assessment Tool (CARAT) – CARAT is a program that facilitates peer review of courses. It is provided to VCT through a Creative Commons license, courtesy of the University of Texas Telecampus. The program has been delivered to Group M7, the host organization for VCT’s website. Group M7 is in the process of setting up individual accounts for each college.

Presidium & Turnitin – Funding legislated for VCT in BY 2010-2011 is insufficient for purchasing licenses to Presidium and Turnitin, which were included in initial Student Success Initiative plans.

Master science course – The eLearning Council and TACC-endorsed proposal to develop a state master science course was presented to TACC, TCCIL, TACTE, and TCCIA. It was favorably received by all groups. Next action steps are included in the FY 2010 strategic plan.

Collaborative degrees and certificates – Colleges continue to indicate little interest in the idea of collaborating in the development and/or delivery of degree and certificate programs. An area for sharing information about collaborative degree and certificate programs has been set up at the VCT website, which also includes a model collaborative degree/certificate agreement. When the interest grows, the system is ready.

Dual Credit

Colleges continue to use VCT in the delivery of dual credit as they have been doing for almost a decade. New on the dual credit horizon is the Texas Virtual School Network (TxVSN). With the eLearning Counsel’s approval, VCT worked with TxVSN through the spring semester to set up a small pilot project, which will take place in the Fall Semester 2009. These four colleges will participate in the Fall 2009 pilot,

each offering the course indicated: Angelina College (GOVT 2301), Howard College (HIST 1301), St. Philips College (ECON 2301), TSTC-Harlingen (GOVT 2301). In the process of setting up the pilot, a number of issues arose, and they were compounded by bills passed in the 81st session of the Texas Legislature. The plan for addressing dual credit issues is included in VCT's FY 2010 strategic plan.

Raising VCT Profile

The Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT) analysis conducted in FY 2008 by VCT Coordinators and reviewed by the eLearning Council identified a significant VCT weakness: an increasing lack of familiarity with VCT among college's administrators as a result of normal turnover among college administrators, including presidents. To address that weakness, VCT presentations were made conferences of TCCIL, TACTE, TCCTA, and TCCIA—specifically to inform administrators about the Student Success Initiative. In addition, the VCT Director worked closely with the Chair of the TACC eLearning Committee (formerly the TACC Telecommunications Committee), Dr. Cheryl Sparks, to keep her informed on key issues, such as the Student Success Initiative and TxVSN. She, in turn, called eLearning Committee meetings via phone conference as needed and reported regularly to the TACC membership in its quarterly meetings.

VCT FY 2010 Strategic Plan

1. Facilitate the resolution of TxVSN/dual-credit issues and the implementation of the TxVSN FY 2009 pilot.

TACC, eLearning Committee, eLearning Council and VCT

Through coordinated effort, schedule a meeting with CB staff to discuss the problematic implications of HB 3646 as it relates to electronically delivered dual credit. Proposed to meet with the CB staff (McGregor Stevens, David Couch, others) are: Dr. Sparks, Chair of the TACC eLearning Committee; Dr. Lee Sloan, Chair of the TACC eLearning Council; Ron Thomson, Director of VCT; and selected other members of the eLearning Council. Issues to address:

- Definition of dual credit (conflicting definitions by Coordinating Board and TEA)
- TxVSN Course review (In its present form it will inhibit, perhaps prohibit, colleges' participation in TxVSN.)
- Professional development (Professional development of college faculty teaching online courses must meet TEA-defined requirements.)
- Applicability of HB 3646 to all electronically delivered distance learning courses. (It appears that all online dual credit courses may be subject to the provisions of HB 3646)
- Possibility of an inter-agency meeting between the CB and TEA regarding the impact of HB 3646 on electronically delivered dual credit courses.

TACC

- Facilitate an inter-agency meeting to address the issues identified above.
- Address these issues raised by HB 2480 and the Texas Virtual School Network:
 - o Tuition for dual credit courses
 - o The impact of HB 2480 on traditionally respected service areas

- SACS issues, specifically the comparability of college level dual credit courses if 25-30% of the content is secondary level TEKS that is not included in the same common-numbered courses offered in a college's other sections.

VCT:

- Continue maintaining linkages/communication with TxVSN and other entities, as appropriate.
- Facilitate and monitor the Fall and Spring TxVSN pilots.
- Assess pilot outcomes

2. Facilitate progress of the Student Success Initiative (SSI): web-based collaborative licenses, development of state master course(s).

Collaborative Licenses

READI – It will continue to be promoted. No further actions for FY 2009 were identified.

SoftChalk – A series of SoftChalk-led webinars, restricted to VCT colleges, will be conducted throughout FY 2010. The series will include two introductory webinars, the first scheduled July 9, 2009, and ten additional webinars on specific topics. Each webinar will be hands-on training.

Digital Resource Repository – Dallas TeleLearning plans additional webinars for FY 2010.

CARAT (Course Analysis, Review and Assessment Tool) – The tool will be made available to colleges in the fall of 2009. It will be released with the UT Telecampus rubric, but it each college may customize it or totally replace it. Web-based training will be provided, though neither the specific strategy nor schedule have been determined yet.

State Master Course(s)

The LeCroy Center has determined that the initial estimate of funding, \$600,000, needed to develop a Master Science Course in collaboration with the LeCroy is insufficient to develop the course to the level that was originally envisioned. How best to use VCT funds to support course development will be a major focus of the fall eLearning Council meeting. **Recommendations:** Continue investigating options and sources of support for developing an online Master Science Course. Investigate possibilities for new partnerships, such as a partnership that includes Oklahoma State University, in addition to the LeCroy Center, to complete at a very high level of quality a chemistry course under development in Oklahoma. Investigate possible partnerships with other developers, publishers and organizations. Consider using VCT funds in other ways, such as hiring an instructional designer to work with collaborating colleges to develop a series of master courses. Investigate commercially produced online labs and collaborative discounts. Get Coordinating Board data on high-enrollment courses.

2. Support efforts of large institutions to renew their participation in VCT.

VCT participation of large institutions may be particularly critical in addressing the demand for online dual credit courses that TxVSN may create. Jim Picquet, Vice President . . ., reported that the Dallas County Community College District is interested in returning to active participation in VCT as a Provider if it is found to be practicable. Covering the cost of instruction as a Provider is a concern for most large institutions. A large-district consortium may be created to undergird large college systems to ensure that their needs are met.

3. Broaden Communication and Connections

Three actions have been proposed to broaden communications and connections with executive level administrators: (1) include representatives from the executive bodies of TCCIA, TACTE, TACE, TCCTA on the eLearning Council; (2) identify executive contacts at all community colleges and communicate with them via an executive listserv on significant issues such as the Student Success Initiative, dual credit and TxVSN; (3) using a regional contacts' list provided by Ron, Council members communicate with other colleges in their regions to keep them informed on VCT initiatives and issues.

4. Develop Additional Single-concept modules (Innovations in Distance Learning)

VCT will contribute \$5,000 in matching funds to TxPOD if the eLearning Council approves based upon members' reviews of modules developed in FY 2008. Ron will coordinate with TxPOD regarding future module development, if the Council so recommends.

5. Explore possible university-community college (VCT) relationships

The time may be right for fostering VCT-university relationships. The UT Telecampus is offering a Creative Commons CARAT license to VCT. A&M is exploring the possibility of implementing VCT's Host-Provider Model within its system. The single-concept training modules were jointly developed by university and community college personnel. Texas Tech has been actively bridge-building for several years, and the University of Texas system has appointed a vice chancellor for community college relations, a former community college president. Ron will meet with Dr. Martha Ellis, former Lee College president, currently UT vice-chancellor of community-college relations to explore possibilities of how students might benefit from VCT-university cooperation and report suggestions to the Council.

6. Continue providing and improving services to support the Host-Provider Model.

Make changes to the reservation system so demographic data may be collected at the point of reserving spaces in classes. Produce semester reports that identify courses with all VCT seats filled. Using an email from the VCT Director to students, encourage them to complete and submit the Evaluation of Instruction and Instructions. Notify Provider colleges' VCT Credentials Administrators when faculty credentials their colleges submit for the electronic document system do not meet SACS standards. Add features to the VCT website suggested by VCT Coordinators.

Community Colleges (TACC) eLearning Council

BYLAWS

PURPOSE

The Texas Association of Community Colleges (TACC) eLearning Council provides input and makes recommendations to TACC regarding distance learning issues that have statewide impact. The Council also provides vision, direction, advice and/or strategic planning as appropriate to the missions of VCT and STARLINK.

***VCT Mission:** To provide increased access to higher education and improved student success through sharing of eLearning resources among Texas two-year colleges.*

***STARLINK Mission:** To provide training, instruction, and information to Texas Community and Technical Colleges and other institutions through the production, acquisition, and delivery of electronic programming and services.*

SPECIFIC DUTIES OF MEMBERS

- Represent the interests and concerns of their respective regions and organizations.
- Attend scheduled meetings, typically in the fall and in the summer.
- Participate in occasional ad hoc conferences.
- Serve on occasional special task forces, on a volunteer basis.

MEMBERSHIP

Regional: Two positions for each of the six TACC-defined regions to be filled by individuals from instructional, support service, professional development, and technical areas.

TSTC: One position for TSTC appointed by TSTC.

Organizational: A position filled by a member from the executive body of each of the following.

- Texas Community College Instructional Administrators
- Texas Association of College Technical Educators
- Texas Administrators of Continuing Education
- Texas Community College Teachers Association

VCT & STARLINK Host Colleges: One position for each of the colleges that serve as host institutions for VCT and STARLINK

Ex Officio Members: Ex officio members may be appointed by the eL Council to address special needs or interests.

MEMBER TERMS OF SERVICE

- *Regional representatives* serve three-year terms.
The term of service for each member begins at the conclusion of the eL Council summer meeting and continues through the three subsequent summer meetings.
- *Ex officio members* are appointed for one-year terms.
- *TCCIA, TACTE, TACE, and TCCTA representatives* as they are appointed by their respective organizations.
- Committee members are eligible for one consecutive term of service.

FILLING REGIONAL POSITIONS

When the terms of service for a region's eLearning Council positions expire, the eLearning Council Chair will seek nominations from the regional representatives whose terms of service are nearing completion. VCT and STARLINK directors may suggest individuals for consideration. The eLearning Council Chair will present the recommendations of the regional representatives to the Chair of the TACC eLearning Committee for approval.

ROTATION OF REGIONAL REPRESENTATIVES

Regional positions rotate on a three year cycle beginning in 2009. Rotation takes place in the following order:

- Rotation 1: East, Southeast
- Rotation 2: South, Central
- Rotation 3: North, West

COUNCIL OFFICERS

Council officers: Chair, Chair-elect, Past Chair

Together, the Chair, Chair-elect, and Past Chair serve as immediate advisors to VCT and STARLINK Directors when issues arise that need Council consideration and input but are not of sufficient significance to require convening the full council via audioconference or in-person meeting.

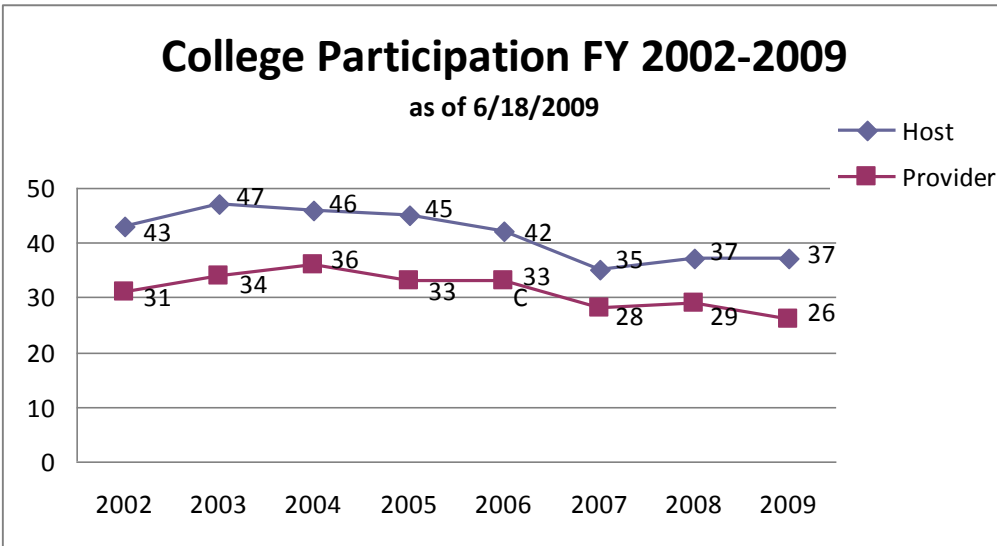
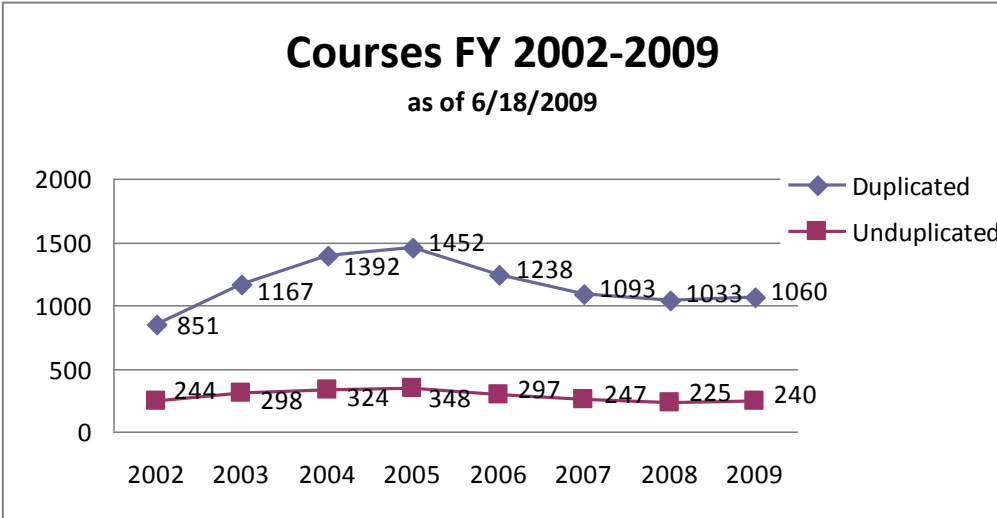
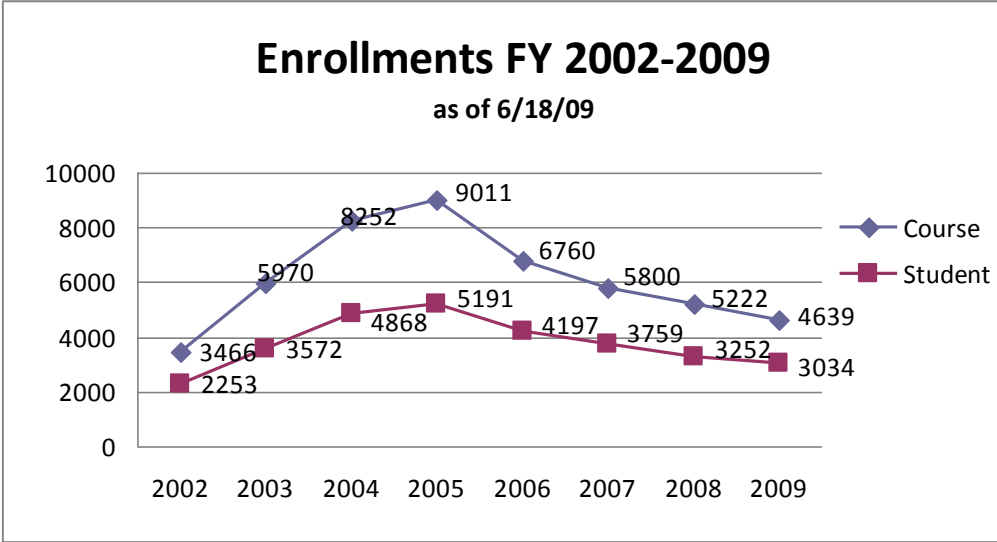
Chair: The Chair presides over meetings and serves as VCT and STARLINK Directors' primary point of contact with the Council. The Chair's term of service is two years and ends at the conclusion of the second summer meeting over which the Chair has presided.

Chair-elect: The Chair-elect presides over meetings in the Chair's absence. Election of the Chair-elect is to be held during the meeting in which the currently presiding Chair's term of service ends.

Past Chair: The Past Chair presides over meetings in the absence of both the Chair and the Chair-Elect. The Past Chair remains an active Council member throughout the Chair's two-year term. It is often the case that the Past Chair's service totals four or more years. In the Past Chair's final year, a new member is appointed to the regional position that the Past Chair filled.

Participation of Non-Council Members in Meetings

Guests who are invited or who elect to attend Council, meetings will be seated apart from the Council meeting table and will speak only if specifically requested to do by the Council Chair.



Action Items Summary

Council Members

- Review bylaws and send final comments/approval to Lee (cc Ron).
- Review the Summer FY 2008 SWOT analysis in meeting packet and forward suggestions for updating it to Ron
- Review and assess lab kit information that Ron will obtain from vendors.
- Review/assess the single concept modules when they are completed and determine if VCT should contribute \$5,000 toward the development of additional modules in FY 2009.
- Communicate with colleges in region represented regarding VCT initiatives and issues, e.g., Collaborative licenses for web-based services, collaborative degrees & certificates, master science course plans, dual credit/TxVSN.
- Let STARLINK staff know what kind of recognition of completion document CC would like to receive

Ron

- Inform Council members of the colleges that are included in their respective TACC-defined regions.
- Obtain from vendors information on science lab kits sufficient for initial assessment. Obtain product samples, if possible.
- Solicit via email testimony from students regarding their experience with VCT and, with their permission, post it at the VCT website, excluding comments about individual instructors.
- Through the course reservation process, collect demographic data required on the common application form.
- Generate a report each semester that shows VCT courses that were heavily used as indicated by all VCT-designated spaces being taken.
- Obtain from the Coordinating Board data on high-enrollment courses.
- Send an email toward the end of the semester encouraging them to complete and submit the Evaluation of Instruction and Services.
- Notify the college's VCT Credentials Administrator when VCT receives faculty credentials for uploading into the electronic document system that do not meet SACS requirements.

Action Plan for Address Dual Credit and TxVSN Issues: See pages 4-5 of this report, VCT FY 2010 Strategic Plan