

Appendix C: BYLAWS

Texas Electronic Coalition for Physics

Article I

Purpose, Nature, and Scope of the Coalition

Section 1: The Texas Electronic Coalition for Physics, hereinafter called the TECP, was informally created by the chairs of the Physics departments at Tarleton State University, Texas A&M University-Kingsville, and West Texas A&M University in 1992. The major goals of the TECP are to (1) provide high quality upper-division courses in physics and closely related disciplines such as astronomy and engineering physics to students, (2) provide research opportunities for undergraduate majors and minors in physics and closely related disciplines, (3) create the administrative infrastructure necessary to enable the TECP to function as a “distributed department,” and (4) provide a functioning model of a distributed department to other programs for adoption elsewhere.

Section 2: The initial Full Members of the TECP shall consist of Tarleton State University, Texas A&M International University, Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi, Texas A&M University-Kingsville, and West Texas A&M University.

Section 3: The TECP will be led by a TECP Chair, hereinafter called the Chair, who will serve as the spokesperson for the TECP. The Chair will be assisted by an Advisory Council, hereinafter called the Council, composed of a single representative from each Full Member of the TECP. The Council is charged with the responsibility of approving all policies and plans of action for the TECP.

Section 4: The activities of the Full Members of the Council and any subsequent members of the Council shall be governed by the basic objectives of the TECP and by the approved role and scope of each university. Other universities eligible to seek membership must be guided by the same general considerations.

Article II

Objectives

Section 1: The specific objectives of the TECP are:

- To develop quality upper division physics courses that can be delivered to students connected to the Internet and a videoconference network (TTVN);
- To develop mechanisms whereby quality laboratory experiences can be provided to students regardless of distance;
- To provide a research environment through which students interested in pursuing studies in a particular sub-discipline of physics or astronomy are teamed with appropriate faculty members regardless of distance;
- To provide a mechanism where participating faculty and students can pursue publishable research regardless of distance;
- To develop the administrative protocols required to effectively administer the coalition as a distributed physics department;
- To provide the electronic infrastructure necessary to store and distribute the records required for the coalition to act as a distributed physics department;
- To develop a mechanism for distributed department governance acceptable to individual institutions, institutional governing boards, state higher education regulatory boards, and accrediting agencies.

Section 2: The primary focus of the Council's work will be on developing the documentation and protocols necessary for the growth of a distributed departmental model acceptable to participating institutions, institutional governing boards, state higher education regulatory boards, and accrediting agencies. It will also be responsible for the development of procedures necessary for the administration of the distributed department.

Article III

Membership

Section 1: Accredited colleges and universities within Texas that have access to a videoconference network accessible to current institutional members may be considered for Full or Affiliate Membership in the TECP.

Section 2: Eligible institutions desiring to participate in the work of the TECP as members shall apply for the appropriate category of membership through the TECP Chair. The Chair will take this application to the Council for consideration.

Section 3: There shall be two classes of institutional membership: Full and Affiliate.

Section 4: Affiliate Members of the TECP will be able to receive any TECP course, and may originate courses upon receiving prior approval via a majority vote of the Council. Each Affiliate Member of the TECP will appoint one faculty member from their Physics program to serve as the TECP liaison for their institution. The institutions having Affiliate Membership may be represented at all TECP Council meetings but shall not have voting rights.

Section 5: Full Members of the TECP will be institutions that desire to provide courses and research opportunities to the TECP. The Local TECP Coordinator at an institution with full membership will serve as a voting member of the TECP Council.

Section 6: Applications for membership in the TECP shall be considered by the Council twice per year. A majority vote of eligible Council members is required for acceptance. The TECP chairperson will notify the applying institution of the results within thirty (30) days of the decision.

Section 7: The status of each TECP member as Full or Affiliate shall be reviewed on an annual basis. An institution can request a change in its status at any time; such request will be reviewed at the Council meeting immediately following the request. A two thirds majority vote is required to change the status of a TECP member institution. The TECP chairperson will notify the institution of any status change within thirty (30) days. The institution has sixty (60) days to appeal this decision in writing. A majority vote of the Council is required to overturn the status change based on the appeal.

Article IV

Officers and Staff

Section 1: The presiding officer at meetings of the TECP Council will be the TECP Chair. The Chair shall be a voting member of the Council chosen by the Council members for a three year term. Each Chair selected shall serve until a successor is selected at the last meeting of the Council during the third academic year of their term. A Chair may not serve more than two consecutive terms until every other institutional representative on the Council has served as Chair.

Section 2: The Council members shall make provisions for the handling of such operational funds as the normal functioning of the TECP may require. The Council members shall make special provisions for the acceptance, custody, and distribution of grant funds or gifts made to the TECP for designated purposes other than routine operations.

Article V Meetings

Section 1: The TECP Council shall have at least two meetings each academic year. Full members shall be officially represented at such meetings by their voting representatives on the Council. Affiliate Members shall be officially represented by their Liaison.

Section 2: When necessary, Council members may be represented at meetings by a proxy.

Article VI Committees

Section 1: The Council shall from time to time establish such ad hoc committees, study groups, and consultancies as may be needed.

Section 2: All reports of committees, study groups, and consultants shall be presented in written form to the Council for appropriate action.

Article VII Miscellaneous Provisions

Section 1: Amendments to the Bylaws of the TECP may be adopted by vote of at least a two-thirds majority of the Council; provided, however, that no amendment may be adopted unless it has been submitted in writing to all Council members at least thirty days in advance.

Section 2: Adequate records of all financial transactions of the TECP shall be kept and shall be subject to annual audit.

Section 3: Neither the TECP nor the Council nor any members thereof shall in the name of the TECP or the Council support or oppose any political cause. Further, no such member may in the name of the Council or the TECP act as proponent or opponent of proposals for basic changes in existing laws, whether local, state, or federal.

Section 4: All cooperative agreements should be formalized in writing, with copies provided to all concerned parties.

Section 5: The TECP as a whole or any combination of member institutions may make joint efforts to seek grants or other funding to support the objectives of the TECP.

Section 6: Cooperation in undergraduate and graduate programs not directly related to TECP course offerings shall be encouraged.

Section 7: The members of the TECP will work cooperatively within the framework of individual university rules and the rules of their Governing Boards to develop proposals for new degrees offered by partner institutions. The same process will be followed to make modifications in academic programs or to alter an institution's participation in a particular degree program.

Section 8: Enrollment in TECP courses:

- Students desiring to enroll in TECP courses will apply at the university from which they plan to graduate. This university will be known as the HOME INSTITUTION. Undergraduate applicants will apply to the HOME INSTITUTION through the usual undergraduate admissions procedures.
- Students accepted into a TECP course will abide by the university rules and undergraduate or graduate school policies at the HOME INSTITUTION.

Section 10: The operational guidelines for the TECP will be reviewed annually and updated as necessary. Changes will require a two-thirds consent of member institutions.