

MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING
Between
Partner Institutions of the
Texas Electronic Coalition for Physics

WHEREAS:

The Department of Engineering and Physics, Tarleton State University,
The Department of Physical and Environmental Sciences, Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi,
The Department of Engineering, Mathematics, and Physics, Texas A&M International University,
The Department of Physics and Geosciences, Texas A&M University-Kingsville, and
The Department of Mathematics, Chemistry, and Physics, West Texas A&M University
have agreed to participate in the Texas Electronic Coalition for Physics (TECP) in order to

- strengthen their physics programs and all other academic programs directly related to physics such as astronomy and engineering physics,
- enable the TECP to function as a distributed physics department through shared faculty resources for delivery of curriculum for upper division physics courses,
- increase physics research opportunities for their students,

THEREFORE:

Tarleton State University, represented by Dr. F. Dominic Dottavio, President,
Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi, represented by Dr. Flavius Killebrew, President,
Texas A&M International University, represented by Dr. Ray M. Keck, III, President,
Texas A&M University-Kingsville, represented by Dr. Steven H. Tallant, President, and
West Texas A&M University, represented by Dr. J. Patrick O'Brien, President,

AGREE to renew their partnership in the TECP as full members and agree to the terms of this Memorandum of Understanding as follows:

1. Bylaws

The participation of institutions in the TECP is governed by the Bylaws of the Texas Electronic Coalition for Physics (see Appendix C). Each of the above institutions agrees to abide by these Bylaws in its interactions with TECP partner institutions. The Bylaws address matters such as the purpose, nature, and scope of the coalition, its objectives, and eligibility for institutional membership in the coalition.

2. Independence

While the degree programs at each TECP partner institution rely to various extents on the academic support extended by TECP, each institution independently administers its academic programs, sets its own degree requirements, and awards its own physics and engineering physics degrees, and degrees in all academic programs that derive support in part or in full from TECP.

3. Conforming to Accreditation Requirements

3.1 TECP will function in a manner consistent with all the policies, guidelines, and standards for joint curricular ventures established by all the accrediting entities that have accreditation jurisdiction over any physics program at any partner institution.

3.2 Each partner institution submits this MOU to state and federal agencies when required by regulations, and to the Commission on Colleges of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools for approval of substantive changes.

4. Faculty Qualifications

Only faculty members with a Ph.D. degree in physics or a closely related field who are credentialed to teach upper division physics courses at their institutions are eligible to teach TECP courses.

5. Personnel Structure and Responsibilities

5.1 Each of the TECP institutions will require a minimum of one physics faculty member to participate in the TECP, and will encourage all members of the physics faculty to participate in the TECP. If more than one physics faculty member at an institution participates in the TECP, then that institution will appoint one of these faculty members as the local TECP coordinator.

5.2 If there is a lone faculty member participating in TECP at a partner institution, then that faculty member will be the local TECP coordinator.

5.3 The local TECP coordinator is responsible for coordinating the communications between her/his institution and partner institutions on all aspects of managing the partnership, informing the local students and faculty of current TECP policies, serving as a point of contact between local students and TECP faculty at partner institutions, and advising the local administration on TECP policies. The local coordinator will also take part in deliberations for formulating and changing TECP policies, and representing, in general, the local institution in TECP related negotiations, but without executive authority, which will continue to be exercised by the head of the academic department in which the physics program resides.

5.4 The TECP Chair, who is elected by the participating physics faculty members for a three year term, will have authority to (1) coordinate the offering of TECP physics courses (the list of which is shown in Appendix A) on an annual or biannual cycle, (2) appoint an instructor or instructors to teach TECP courses in consultation with relevant academic department Chairs at partner institutions, (3) arrange for the evaluation of the TECP courses and their instructors by students while maintaining the anonymity of students, and communicate the results of such evaluation to the course instructors and the Chair of the Academic Department to which the instructor belongs, (4) act as the spokesperson of TECP, and (5) manage the information on TECP that is communicated to the external world through the internet, brochures, and other publicity material.

5.5 An institution originating a TECP course is responsible for the delivery of course curriculum to all TECP partner institutions, including providing access to all course contents in all forms, grading student work, providing remote office hours, and reporting students' final grades.

5.6 The authority to award the final letter grade for all students enrolled in a certain TECP course resides with the course instructor even if the instructor belongs to an institution other than the students'.

5.7 Faculty at partner institutions participating in the TECP will attend monthly TECP meetings via videoconference, and/or otherwise participate in a virtual or face-to-face monthly meeting to discuss issues related to the coalition, the physics curriculum, and opportunities for TECP students.

6. Facilities, Services, and Instructional Resources

6.1 Each TECP institution will provide resources for student contact with TECP instructors and administrators. Such resources include, but are not limited to, computers, scanners, long distance telephone, fax, email, and videoconference connections.

6.2 Each partner institution will provide library resources adequate to support every TECP course either through its own library or through inter-library arrangements.

6.3 Each partner institution will provide laboratory resources, relevant software, and experimental equipment adequate to support every TECP laboratory-based course either through its own physics teaching laboratories or through other arrangements such as remote access to experimental equipment at other TECP partner institutions.

6.4 Each partner institution will extend to other TECP partner institutions remote online access to experimental equipment wherever possible.

6.5 Each partner institution will prescribe the same textbook and other required curricular resources for a course as the partner institution that originates the course.

6.6 Each partner institution will provide required services to students with disabilities for completion of every TECP course, in consultation with the student, the student's home institution's Office of Services for Students with Disabilities or its equivalent office, and the course instructor.

6.7 Each partner institution will provide adequate office support for two-way transmission of students' completed and graded assignments, projects, reports, and exams to an instructor or local coordinator at another partner institution.

6.8 Each partner institution will produce a report for the TECP Chair every year detailing its efforts in providing facilities and instructional resources for supporting TECP courses, and the TECP chair will produce a comprehensive report on the Coalition's combined facilities and instructional resources, which will be included in each institution's annual physics program assessment.

7. Changes to Curriculum and New Courses

7.1 The TECP will have a standing Curriculum Committee with a Chair elected by the Committee members.

7.2 The Curriculum Committee will consider requests for approval of changes to the TECP physics curriculum, and new course proposals, and make recommendations on such requests to the TECP faculty.

7.3 The Curriculum Committee's recommendations will be voted on by the TECP faculty partners, and any changes approved by this faculty will need to go through further approval at each TECP institution according to its internal processes for approval.

7.4 The Curriculum Committee will review the list of courses offered by the TECP, the course contents, and curriculum delivery every four years, and recommend changes to the courses based on the effectiveness of courses following course assessment.

8. Course Credit

8.1 The amount and level of credit awarded to each TECP course by each institution will be the same.

8.2 The amount and level of credit awarded to each TECP course will be as recommended by the TECP Curriculum Committee and will be consistent with prevailing standards for similar courses in institutions of higher education.

8.3 The recommendations of the Curriculum Committee on the amount and level of credit awarded to each TECP course will require approval by the TECP faculty and by each institution through its internal approval process.

8.4 The award of credit for a TECP course to a student successfully completing that course is the responsibility of the TECP institution in which the student has enrolled as a full time or part time student, regardless of which TECP partner delivers the curriculum for the course.

9. Recruitment and Counseling of Students

9.1 Each partner institution will cooperate with other TECP partner institutions by jointly developing brochures, web sites, and other materials to publicize TECP courses and programs in physics and related disciplines.

9.2 The recruitment of students for TECP courses, or for pursuing an academic program in physics and closely related fields at a certain TECP partner institution is the responsibility of that institution, and each institution will fulfill this responsibility through its own team of faculty mentors and advisors.

9.3 Informing the students of degree requirements and counseling students seeking credits for TECP courses, or a major or minor in physics or a closely related field at a certain TECP partner institution is the responsibility of that institution, and each institution will fulfill this responsibility through its own team of faculty mentors and advisors.

10. Program Assessment

10.1 Each institution will cooperate with its TECP partners in the assessment of the TECP physics courses.

10.2 The Chair of the TECP is responsible for producing an annual TECP outcomes assessment report, conforming to a jointly agreed format, and will provide the report to the Chairs of Academic Departments at TECP institutions administering physics and closely related academic programs.

10.3 The annual TECP outcomes assessment report will assess the successes of the coalition by tracking (1) the total enrollment in all TECP courses, (2) the total number of graduating students with a major or minor in physics or a closely related field in all partner institutions, (3) the research accomplishments of majors and minors in physics or a closely related field at partner institutions and the role TECP played in such successes, (4) the award of scholarships to majors and minors in physics or a closely related field at partner institutions and the role TECP played in such awards, and (5) the employment and graduate program opportunities that graduating students with a major or minor in physics or a closely related field at partner institutions pursued immediately after graduation.

10.4 Each TECP course will have student learning outcomes approved jointly by all TECP faculty members. An instructor teaching a TECP course will (1) assess student performance against the TECP approved course specific student learning outcomes and report a summary of class findings to all TECP members, and (2) return a copy of all graded student work to partner institutions' local coordinators for any additional assessment required for program assessment and accreditation by partner institutions.

11. Course/Instructor Evaluation

11.1 The TECP will create a common course effectiveness evaluation instrument through discussions among the participating faculty and set deadlines for the students to complete such evaluations and for the TECP Chair to receive these evaluations from each TECP coordinator. The TECP Chair will preserve the anonymity of the student evaluators by facilitating the typing of the written student evaluations into a separate document before sharing it with the course instructor and her/his Academic Department Chair, or by gathering all such students' course effectiveness evaluation data, including comments, in an anonymous electronic form.

11.2 If the TECP Chair teaches a course, then the course effectiveness evaluation function of the TECP Chair for that course will be performed by a TECP coordinator at a partner institution.

11.3 The TECP Chair will transmit the results of these course effectiveness evaluations to the course instructor as well as the Chair of the Academic Department to which the instructor belongs or her/his supervisor.

11.4 The instructor of a TECP course will be evaluated for teaching effectiveness by students in that course at all partner institutions receiving that course, and each partner institution will utilize its own evaluation instrument for such instructor evaluation. Copies of TECP course instructor evaluations will be transmitted by partner institutions to the TECP Chair who will produce a summary report on the instructor's teaching effectiveness as gauged by student responses without adding additional comments of her/his own, and send that report to the course instructor and the Chair of the Academic Department to which the course instructor belongs.

12. Handling Complaints Related to Courses/Instructors

12.1 If a student in a TECP course originating at that student's institution wishes to file a complaint pertaining to that course or against the instructor for that course, then the ordinary rules and procedures for handling such complaints at the student's institution will apply.

12.2 If a student in a TECP course wishes to file a complaint pertaining to that course originating at a partner institution or against the instructor for that course, the following process and "chain of command" shall apply for the resolution of the complaint: (1) Local TECP coordinator at complaining student's institution facilitates contact between the student and the pertinent TECP course instructor at partner institution for resolution of the complaint by the instructor. (2) Local coordinator at the course originating institution considers the complaint for resolution, following a request by the local coordinator at the complaining student's institution. (3) Chair of the TECP considers the complaint for resolution, following a request by the local coordinator at the complaining student's institution. (4) Chair of the Academic Department at the course originating institution considers the complaint for resolution, following a request by the local coordinator at the complaining student's institution. If the complaint is not resolved at this stage the further consideration of the complaint will follow the process laid down by the rules and procedures at the course originating institution. If the complaint is resolved at one level it will not be considered at the next level, and such resolution will be deemed to be final by all partner institutions of the coalition.

13. Grade Appeal Handling

13.1 Student grade appeals pertaining to a TECP course originating at a partner institution, not resolved by a direct appeal from the student to the course instructor within two weeks of the official award of letter grade, should be filed with the local TECP coordinator at the student's home institution no later than the first week of classes of the following regular semester. The further consideration of the appeal will be as mandated by the rules and procedures that apply to such grade appeals at the student's institution.

13.2 In case of a grade appeal against an instructor at a partner institution, that instructor would play the same role in the appeal process as s/he would have played had s/he been an instructor at the appealing student's institution. In case a grade appeals committee meeting is called to consider the student's appeal, the meeting will be held in a videoconference room with the instructor required to attend the meeting remotely through videoconference or in person.

14. Course Equivalencies, Catalog Course Listing, & Publishing Semester Class Schedules

14.1 The courses listed in the same row in the table in Appendix A will be considered equivalent.

14.2 Each institution agrees to list all TECP courses being offered in a particular semester as part of their course offerings during that semester. Each institution also agrees to list all of the TECP courses in its course catalog subject to any state, institutional, or governing board requirements for catalog course listings.

14.3 To facilitate course planning by the TECP, the local TECP coordinator at each institution will inform the TECP Chair of her/his institution's academic calendar and physics course schedule for the following semester within a week of their finalization every semester. The TECP Chair shall publish at the TECP's web site the links to the comprehensive set of academic calendars and course schedules at other TECP partner institutions within a week of their availability.

15. Admission of Students to Courses

15.1 The partner institutions will have common pre-requisites for TECP courses.

15.2 Students at TECP partner institutions can register for TECP courses at their own institutions subject to the fulfillment of course pre-requisites. Monitoring the fulfillment of such pre-requisites at each institution is the responsibility of that institution.

16. Evaluation of Student Progress

16.1 The monitoring and evaluation of the progress of students enrolled in a TECP course is primarily the responsibility of the course instructor, who will periodically communicate with students regarding their progress, and with other TECP coordinators.

16.2 The monitoring and evaluation of TECP students' progress toward completion of their degree program is the sole responsibility of the students' own home institution.

17. Core Requirement

TECP does not offer a joint degree program and therefore TECP does not specify a set of core courses required for physics or related degree programs at partner institutions. The structure of core courses required for such degrees at a member institution will be specified by that institution.

18. Tuition and Fee Sharing

The TECP will provide the courses specified in Appendix A as videoconference/internet based distance education courses to partner institutions. Teaching workload credit, as well as receipt of tuition and fees generated by these courses, will be governed by the ancillary agreement provided in Appendix B.

19. Intellectual Property

The material developed by participating TECP instructors for use in TECP courses is the intellectual property of the instructor and the instructor's institution, subject to faculty intellectual property policy at that partner institution.

20. Record Keeping and Information Security

20.1 Information, including private information as defined by regulations at any one of the participating institutions, of those students that participate in TECP courses will be maintained by the TECP Chair and the TECP faculty on (i) a secure server dedicated to TECP, and currently maintained by TAMUCC, or partner, and (ii) other institutional servers. Such information can be shared amongst TECP faculty and staff partners of the TECP at all participating institutions, provided that such sharing does not violate any privacy restrictions incumbent on any partner institution.

20.2 Maintaining students' academic records including their grades is the responsibility of the students' home institutions.

21. Withdrawal from Partnership

21.1 Each partner maintains its partnership until such time as it rescinds it by a notice to other partners, but such rescission can become effective only on the 15th of August of the year of rescission. Notice of rescission must

be communicated to partner institutions at least one year in advance of the effective date of withdrawal of the partner from the coalition.

21.2 If a partner institution rescinds this MOU, that institution is responsible for the curriculum delivery of all the upper division physics courses required for completion of pertinent degree programs by its students without jeopardizing their graduation plans built around the assumption of continued institutional participation in TECP. Such physics curriculum delivery will be in effect for a minimum of three years from the date that the institution's withdrawal from TECP becomes effective.

22. Periodic MOU Review

This MOU is considered a living and dynamic agreement, subject to continuous modification and improvement for the mutual benefit of the partner institutions, and will be reviewed once every five years by the TECP Governing Board. This MOU is effective January 10, 2010.

IN AFFIRMATION:

Dr. F. Dominic Dottavio, President, Tarleton State University

Date



Dr. Flavius C. Killebrew, President, Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi

1/5/10

Date

Dr. Ray M. Keck, III, President, Texas A&M International University

Date

Dr. Steven H. Tallant, President, Texas A&M University-Kingsville

Date

Dr. J. Patrick O'Brien, President, West Texas A&M University

Date