Report of VCT Coordinators' Summer Meeting
Radisson Hotel, Austin
June 13-14, 2005

Colleges Represented:

Alamo-Northwest Vista
Alamo-San Antonio
Alamo-St. Philip's College
Angelina
Austin
Blinn
Cisco
Coastal Bend
College of the Mainland
*Collin CCCD
Dallas CCCD
Del Mar
El Paso
Galveston College
Hill College

*Howard College
Kilgore
*Laredo
Lee College
McLennan
Midland
North Central TX
*North Harris Montgomery CCD
Odessa
Panola
Paris Jr. College
San Jacinto
South Texas College
Southwest TX Jr. College
Tarrant

Temple
Texas Southmost College
TSTC-Harlingen
TSTC-Waco
Tyler
TVCC
Victoria College
Weatherford
Western TX
Wharton

*participated via audioconference

June 13 Morning Session: VCT Orientation

This session, conducted by Ron Thomson, was held for VCT Coordinators new to their positions or anyone else who could benefit from review of VCT principles, practices, and processes. He began by explaining that first and foremost, VCT is a *service* of the Texas Association of Community Colleges, and it is a *voluntary collaborative*. Details of the orientation are included at the end of this report.

June 13 Afternoon Session

VCT STATUS REPORT

Ron Thomson reported on the current status (Powerpoint presentation) of VCT operations and new initiatives.

Enrollments. FY 05 enrollments at the time of the meeting totaled approximately 8,996, with 2,797 taking place this summer. (At the time this report was released the final total for FY 05 enrollments was 9,022.)

Other FY O5 Accomplishments
- VCT included in appropriations bill (waiting for governor to sign)
- Overall satisfaction with VCT: 5.67 (6-pt. scale)
- Website improvements
  - o Online syllabi
  - o Expanded rosters email capability
  - o Student ID format: any format accepted
  - o Course listing form

- o Automatic notification of instructor changes
  - o Instructional Fee List
- Consultations with SACS
- Eleven grant projects being completed
- New grant program for 2005-2007 biennium

Electronic Grade and Enrollment Rosters. Electronic grade and enrollment rosters should be ready for piloting by spring 2006.

Invoices. Ron stated that VCT would develop and implement a prototype electronic invoice system for colleges to use if they please. It should be ready for a pilot test by summer 06.

Website. Aleta Garcia gave the coordinators a list of website changes implemented since Fall '04.

Coordinators' Priorities for FY 06

The following website changes were suggested by the Coordinators.

- Add a Technology contact to the Student area and the VCT contacts area?
- Suppress students' email addresses when using the email feature at the rosters.
- Create a specialized listserve regarding VCT/SACS.
- Add start/end dates to forward rosters email.
- Add city/state/zip to student email notification.
- Add instructor's email address to the "cc" line on the reservation email. This is so coordinators realize that instructor receives a copy of the email.
- Add link to Instructor's List on Course Listing Form.
- Add link to Instructor's List on Provider's Qualifications Administration page.
- Sort the rosters by start/end dates.
- If user sends email to students through the rosters area, email content should show up in Student Log.
- Add search engine to the website.

New VCT Grants FY 06-07
- $300,000 available
- Similar grant application as round one, except: collaboration counts (10 points out of 100 points in proposal evaluation)
  - o Collaborative experience with VCT
  - o Other collaborative experience

Special Projects

Mickey Slimp from the Northeast Texas Consortium (NETnet) gave an update to the coordinators. Internet Teacher's Project ended last year. 1500 teacher were trained. E-packs for the curriculum are available for any college to use, and colleges may modify them as the please, because the curricuoom was developed with Perkins funds.

Texas Collaborative for Professional Development Project: How to Keep Your Online Students.

150 people are on the waiting list for that course. It will be taught this summer. This is the last time it will be directly funded through the project but an E-pack will be available.

There will be one more workshop in August at South Texas Community College. The funding is closed out now, and Mickey is looking for more funding. Internet Teachers will not completely disappear. Del Mar held a workshop last month.

Junior/Community College Student Personnel Association of Texas (J/CCSPAT) can bring workshops to your campus, including workshop such as: How to Get Student Support, Student Newspaper Online, Student Government. Workshops can be webinars. Mickey inquired if anyone knew of potential developers and presenters of workshops. The requirements would be a minimum enrollment of 10 people, and the workshop must be open to other colleges.

An online monograph on best practices for student support services also is being developed. There will be a seminar at Canyon of the Eagles in West Texas, June 29, 30 and July 1st. The Project is taking care of expenses. The Project also is developing a DVD to train online tutors who work with students with disabilities. Texas collaborative for professional development website: http://www.texascollaborative.org/

Ron praised Mickey Slimp for his contributions to VCT.

LEARN

Bill Carter an Associate Vice President of Information Technology at Austin Community College gave an update on the Lonestar Education and Research Network (LEARN).

SACS and VCT

Ron Thomson gave reported on the status of the VCT-SACS Statewide Review. He also provided a handout that which detailed the process of the review, the actions to date, and the preliminary timeline of the process.

Suggestions for keeping colleges on board throughout the review:

- Hire a great press agent for VCT.
- Emphasize VCT's importance to students. One coordinator shared that she knows many students who cannot make it to campus, or the local colleges doesn't offer the course, or sections are filled up.
- Everybody working together is the best way to close the gaps. Collaborate.
- Part of bigger picture. For some students, VCT is critical to their being able to all the courses they need for a degree.
- One coordinator stated that the last 2 classes he took were through VCT.
- VCT has at its heart maximizing access to all, of particularly value to students who work full time.
- At one college, VCT makes possible a complete online degree program.
- Sharing is important: Shared opportunity. 365 day Help Desk for everyone. Shared mentoring. Shared library services.
- Build capacity without brick and mortar. This is a lot cheaper than building more campuses.
- VCT represents a return to the whole-state perspective.

- Find effective ways to communicate with Institutional Effectiveness, Human Resources, and Instructional Administrators--more than presentations at conferences.

June 14 Session

Best Practices: Ideas & Suggestions from Coordinators

- Under the "other information" field on a reservation and require students to send an email to the coordinator that they are going to drop the course. That way the students cannot drop without informing the coordinator first. Or tell students if they don't contact the coordinator to drop they will receive an F.
- Make sure you check to see who the testing contact is for that school before you send tests out and keep the testing contacts current please.
- Send the instructors the name of VCT testing contacts.
- Show quality control. If there is an instructor that has received student complaints don't list their courses at the VCT.
- Keep VCT contacts current in the VCT Contacts list.
- Update VCT specific information in your syllabi. Some students have mistakenly thought there is an on-campus orientation for a VCT course.
- Go over the start/end dates with your students before they reserve a space. Some students graduating have found out the class ends after commencement. Require your students to submit an email to reserve a space and have the student type the start/end dates in the email. That way the student takes full responsibility for the reservation and that way it is in writing and the coordinator can put it in the student's file.
- Make sure your information in the course listing form is correct. Make sure you indicate the correct answers for proctored testing.
- If a class is cancelled, send an email to Host college coordinators letting them know.
- Use the email function at the rosters to forward a letter to instructors to validate their grades.

Breakout Sessions

Coordinators were divided into three breakout groups and given a charge to brainstorm ways to improve VCT. They were encouraged to consider new website services, improved practices and procedures other than web-based, internal practices, or any other approach/strategy that may be useful.

The following suggestions came from the small-group meetings.

Terry's Group

- Ideas for Online Grades/Census Rosters
  - Sort info on one page
  Name   ID   Class   Grade   # Grade   Census Date
- Books. Pell Grants. Smart Check. El Paso has direct deposit. Financial aide gives the student a bank card and they can use the money however they wish. Talk to your bookstore. The student writes down how much the book costs and then takes it to the financial aide office.

Lula's Group

- On the official census and grade rosters, **do not** list students who have withdrawn before the census date. On the VCT rosters, **continue** to list all students, whether they withdrew before the census date or not.
- An online course request for students. It could be up to the individual colleges whether they wanted to utilize it.
- Add instructor's list link to the Provider Qualifications Administration page.
- Sort the rosters by start/end dates.

Pat's Group

- Have to make sure that funding is first on the legislature's agenda. What is back-up funding? What's our contingency?
- VCT training? Instructors, counseling.
- The purpose of the grants was to focus on development of programs. To form new courses if colleges did not have them in their catalog.
- Inventory for course number of credits. One VCT class is 3 credits, one is four credits. How do we deal with it?
- How do we know students are taking VCT classes that they really need? How do you advise your students? Maybe this is something that could be posted to the listserve.
- Registrars. How is course counted towards graduation?
- Should special needs courses be offered through VCT? (Consensus was NO.)
- Science courses with labs. Some colleges allow these and others don't. Must let students know if it is a dry or wet lab. Lab hours must be equivalent to what you are transcripting.
- Subject area with specific needs. DCCCD is willing to post courses but they need to know what is most needed around the state.
- How do we plan to deal with getting others getting others to accepting online credentials?
- Student study groups. A coordinator had a request to release email addresses to other students. Coordinator contacted other students for permission before she shared emails.
- Thanks to all colleges for their developmental and math courses.
- Dallas has training for creating online courses with a certain pedagogy.

Priorities
Grade rosters
Census rosters
SACS

VCT Orientation

VCT History. VCT began as an initiative of community college presidents. They saw that distance learning was changing the face of higher education, and Texas two-year colleges needed to respond proactively. In meetings during the summer and fall of 1996, they conceived the host-provider model under which VCT operates, and they appointed a TACC Distance Learning Advisory Committee (DLAC) to address issues that the model posed. Meeting frequently between February 1997 through summer 1998, the DLAC delineated the responsibilities of host and provider colleges and resolved VCT operational issues in preparation for a three-year pilot project. The pilot project was launched in the fall semester of 1998, and it came to a successful conclusion in August 2001. VCT began operating as an on-going service in the 2001 fall semester.

Mission. The mission of VCT is to enhance access to higher education by sharing distance learning resources among member colleges. Those resources include courses, faculty, student services, technology, and administrative support.

Host-Provider Model. The host-provider model is the strategic foundation that makes distance learning resource sharing possible on a statewide scale. With this model, local (host) colleges enroll students to take courses offered by remote (provider) colleges. The host provides student support services and transcripts the course. Collecting all tuition and fees, the host college pays the provider college an instructional lease fee, an amount determined by the provider, which typically does not exceed what the host receives in contact-hour reimbursement from the state. (Note: This fee structure may need to be modified for Continuing Education).

Critical Key. A critical key to making VCT's host-provider model work is the common course numbering system. Without common course numbers, it would be much more difficult to transcript courses locally that are provided by remote colleges.

Governance. Governance of the Virtual College of Texas rests squarely with the Texas Association of Community Colleges. For operational guidance, VCT relies upon the counsel of the TACC Distance Learning Advisory Committee, the Distance Learning Advisory Committee of Texas Administrators of Continuing Education (TACE), and extensive input from member colleges.

After reviewing what VCT is and how it operates, Ron emphasized what VCT is NOT:
- a maker of policy or regulations
- a decision-maker regarding its role or scope
- a referee among member institutions

Ron called attention to the foundational VCT documents listed below. He then presented a synthesis of basic VCT agreements contained in all of them, followed by a more detailed look at the *VCT Operations Manual*. Each document is available at the VCT website (www.vct.org). The slides used in the presentation may be viewed by clicking here: Powerpoint Slides Part I and Part II

VCT foundational documents:

- [VCT MOU](VCT MOU)
    - One-page document specifying basic VCT agreements
    - Signed by all Texas two-year college presidents or chancellors
- ["Guidelines for CE Provider and Host Responsibilities"](Guidelines for CE Provider and Host Responsibilities)
    - Summary of issues and responsibilities related to VCT and who (host or provider) is responsible for addressing them
- VCT Operations Manual
  This document delineates actions that various categories of college personnel need to take to make VCT work at member colleges serving in both host and provider roles. Personnel include: VCT Coordinators, Advisors and Counselors, Instructors, Registrar's Office, and Business Office. VCT actions are to be taken in these four time periods:
    - Before a semester begins
    - During advisement and registration
    - During a semester
    - End of semester