

Biographical note: Don Smith was recently appointed as Interim President at the University of Houston-Victoria. He served as Provost from 1995 to 2006, including an eight-month stint as Interim President in 2004. Following his retirement, he taught one online course each semester for three years. He previously served as the chief academic officer at West Georgia College and at UH-Victoria from 1987 through 1992. He has a PhD from the University of Michigan, MA from Ohio University, and BA from Berea College.

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Re: Three-year degree

Current status:

- “Degree in Three” is UHV’s option for completing the bachelor’s degree in selected fields in three years. Since UHV is admitting its first freshman class this fall, previously having been an upper-level-only institution, we do not yet have results to report on the success of this option. In a few years we will have.
- Currently, six students have selected Degree in Three, five in Criminal Justice and one in Psychology.

What the three-year degree option is not:

- It is not similar to the three-year baccalaureate degree offered in England, India, and some other countries. Those degrees are based on a different system of education and may or may not be accepted as sufficient preparation for admission to given graduate programs at U.S. universities.
- It is not a reduced program. There is no difference in course requirements, credit hours needed, or academic standards.

What the three-year degree option is:

- UHV’s Degree in Three allows students to complete a bachelor’s degree through a structured program in Communication, English, Psychology, History, or Criminal Justice.
- The option also offers a provision to freeze tuition and fees at the rates charged at the time of a student’s entry into one of these programs.
- The structure of the program and the scheduling of coursework are the defining characteristics.

- The program has to be one that can be completed in 120 credit hours, though it is certainly possible to earn more credits than that in a three-year period.
- The enrollment demand for the program needs to be such that the requisite courses can be routinely scheduled during the summers, as well as regular semesters.
- Institutional commitment is vital. Although students do occasionally complete a degree in three years without any institutional commitment, such accomplishment usually requires compromises in course selection and some luck.
- Students who do not complete 40 credit hours in each of their first two years will be dropped from the Degree-in-Three and will then pay tuition and fees at current rates.

Benefits:

- For Students:
 - Total costs for lodging, food, transportation and other needs related to the amount of time spent in earning a degree are lower.
 - Further savings are possible based on UHV's provision for freezing tuition and fees at the rates in effect when the student first commits to the Degree in Three.
 - Income potential increases, in that students enter the workforce one-year early as college graduates—with a lifetime earning potential estimated at \$1 million more than high school graduates can expect.
 - Earlier entry into graduate or professional school is also possible for students continuing their education.
- For the University:
 - The Degree in Three can be a powerful recruitment incentive, especially for the kind of focused and motivated students every university wants to attract.
 - It can also be a powerful retention tool, in that students have an incentive to stay committed to the expeditious completion of their degree.
 - It offers the possibility of recruiting cohorts of students who would begin a given program at the same time, take the same courses, and graduate at the same time. Evidence indicates that cohorts can improve student learning, retention, and satisfaction. Further, they

establish relationships that can continue to benefit students when and after they begin their careers.

- For the State:
 - Although there would be no difference in formula funding for credits generated for the 120 credit hours, the highly structured nature of the program would likely reduce the average number of credit hours students might otherwise take.
 - Over time and on average, some saving in average resource investment per graduate could be anticipated.
 - The biggest benefit likely would be the faster entry of these students into the workforce, as well as the kind of work ethic they would undoubtedly bring to the job.

Limitations:

- The option assumes academically prepared students capable of handling a standard course load averaging 15 credits for each of six semesters and 10 credits for each of three summers.
- Students need resources sufficient for year-round study, though the coursework should allow sufficient time for part-time work, since 15 credits is not an overload.
- Selection is currently limited to a small number of programs.

Bachelor of Arts in Psychology					
	Fall	Spring	Summer		
Year 1	LD Core	LD Core	LD Core		
	ENGL 1301 English Comp I	ENGL 1302 English Comp II	PSCI 2305 American Government (Summer I)		
	HIST 1301 History I	HIST 1302 History II	PSCI 2306 Texas State & Local Government (Summer II)		
	PSYC 2301 Intro to Psychology	MATH 1314 College Algebra	SPCH 1315 Public Speaking (Summer I)		
	BIOL 1309 Life on Earth	BIOL 1306 General Biology I	COSC 1301 Technology & Problem Solving (Summer II)		
	SPAN 1301 Elementary Spanish	SPAN 1302 Elementary Spanish II			
Hours	15	15	12		
Year 2	Begin Major		No Coursework Required		
	DRAM 2366 Intro to Cinema	PSYC 4311 Abnormal Psychology	HUMA/HIST/ENGL UD Elective		
	PHIL 1303 Critical Thinking	SPAN 2302 Intermediate Spanish II	ENGL 3430 Professional Writing		
	SPAN 2301 Intermediate Spanish I	HUMA 4322 Ethics	Elective		
	PSYC 3315 Stats for the Social Science	PSYC 4318 Research Methods			
	PSYC 3316 Child & Adolescent Development	PSYC 4320 Principles of Learning			
Hours	15	15	10		
Year 3	Major	Major			
	PSYC 3314 Physiological Psychology	PSYC 4312 Social Psychology	Elective		
	PSYC 4314 History & Systems	HUMA/HIST/ENGL UD Elective	UD Elective		
	PSYC 4310 Tests & Measurement	UD Elective	Elective		
	UD Elective	UD Elective			
	Elective	UD Elective			
Hours	15	15	9		112