Connecticut Board of Regents for Higher Education
Academic Program/Low Completer Review Process

Proposal

Amend Academic Program Review Policy

History

The Board of Regents established the Academic Program Review Policy on August 21, 2014 declaring academic program review to be integral to academic planning and assessment efforts at the institutional level. The Board considers APR to be a means of ensuring continuous quality improvement of academic programs and an informative instrument to facilitate dialogue among the Regents, System administrators and institutional administrators. Key elements of such discussions include reflections on educational practices and the review of academic programs within the totality of academic offerings at the institutional level.

Purpose

State statutes empower the Board of Regents (BOR) to grant accreditations to the institutions of the Connecticut State Colleges and Universities (CSCU) System and their academic programs; therein authorizing them to operate and confer higher educational credentials (Connecticut General Statutes, Sections 10a-143, 10a-87 and 10a-72). Degrees are conferred by the BOR in their capacity as the board of trustees of the specific constituent unit.

Among the BOR's responsibilities is assuring the public about the educational quality and effectiveness of the credential-granting institutions it governs. NECHE standard 3.15, however, notes, "The [accredited] institution places primary responsibility for the content, quality, and effectiveness of the curriculum with its faculty. Faculty have a substantive voice in matters of educational programs,…" Therefore, when the BOR questions the efficacy of a program the faculty and academic dean/provost at that institution shall be encouraged to offer data and documentation supporting the retention of the program if they believe maintaining the program is in the best interests of their students and their community.

The BOR's Academic Program Review (APR) Policy is its chief instrument for quality assurance - the principal, catalytic mechanism for assessing program quality and effectiveness, and providing information for the continuous quality improvement of teaching and learning. In determining program viability, the BOR relies heavily upon the CSCU institutions to employ APR as a tool for quality control. Within that control is a forthright self-study, which specifically includes an examination of the degree to which an academic program actually confers the credential(s) for which it was established.

This policy amendment is enacted to facilitate a process to conduct reviews of low producing academic programs in terms of the program's productivity over a three-year period – see Definition below. This aspect of program review is also applicable to considerations regarding

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the duplication of existing programs as an evaluative tool to determine a program's viability and continuation. The assessment analysis, and outcomes that result will contribute to making higher education more efficient, sustainable, and valuable to the state of Connecticut and its citizenry.

Definition

An academic program is to be examined as a **Low Completer** if it has, at the point of its periodic reporting to the BOR, a three-year average fewer than the following number of credentials conferred:

Credential	Productivity Level
Undergraduate Certificate	12 (avg. 4 per year)
Associate Degree	24 (avg. 8 per year)
Bachelor's Degree / Post-Bachelor's / Graduate Certificate	30 (avg. 10 per year)
Masters' Degree / Post-Masters	15 (avg. 5 per year)
Doctoral	3 (avg. 1 per year)

In the interest of uniformity, all programs at all institutions will be subject to these guidelines. This includes programs granted some type of maintenance provision (temporary, conditional or unconditional) in the most recent review.

Preliminary Screening

The System's Office of Research & System Effectiveness (ORSE) will provide each CSCU institution with a roster of academic programs that appear to meet the **Low Completer** definition. ORSE will compile data from the federal Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) reporting for the 2014-15, 2015-16 and 2016-17 academic years. Hence, the institutions will be afforded the opportunity to ***examine programs that meet the low completer designation,*** adding completions data for the 2017-18 academic year. Consequently, the institutions must decide upon a course of action outlined below in the Process. Recommendations resulting from the preliminary screening are to be presented to the Board of Regents for its consideration via the System Office of the Provost and Senior Vice President for Academic and Student Affairs.

In subsequent years, the examination of **Low Completer** programs becomes an element of the annual academic program review process. The APR Policy requires "all academic programs to undergo a comprehensive review" and states that "at a minimum, each degree and certificate granting program is subject to review at least once every seven-years." An APR formal report, per the CSCU institution's format/structure, is due to the institution's chief academic officer or his/her designee by June of the program's reporting year. The institution's synopsis of all the formal reports submitted that reporting year is due to the System Office of the Provost in August. In that synopsis – the End-of-Year Report (APR Form 2) – those academic programs meeting the

Low Completer definition must be identified in column (d), with one of the four recommending actions stipulated below:

Process

The reporting academic program deemed a **Low Completer** in consultation with the institution's chief academic officer must recommend one of the following actions to the BOR at designated periods of time:

1. Program Termination
2. Program Suspension
3. Program Consolidation
4. Program Continuation

Termination

Community College and Charter Oak State College program officials, with the explicit approval of the institution, submits an *Application for Discontinuation of Existing Program*, per the System's existing procedures and instructions of the application form which includes a Phase Out / Teach out Strategy. State University officials shall follow the process set forth in the CSU-AAUP BOR Collective Bargaining Agreement.[1]

Suspension

Program officials, with the explicit approval of the institution, submits an *Application for Suspension of Existing Program*, per the System's existing procedures and instructions of the application form which includes a Phase Out / Teach out Strategy, as well as a projected reinstatement or termination date.

Consolidation

Program officials, with the explicit approval of the institution, submits a rationale for program consolidation that address each of the following issues:

- A brief description of what the consolidation would entail and a plan for implementation, including program modality and any curricular adjustments;
- Reasons why a consolidated program would succeed as compared to previous arrangements;
- Anticipated fiscal impact and opportunities for reinvestment, with consolidation;
- All relevant issues identified in the program's formal APR report

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[1] See Section 5.20 CSU-AAUP BOR Collective Bargaining Agreement.

<u>Continuation</u>

Program officials, with the explicit approval of the institution, submits an–A. Improvement Plan B. Zero Fiscal-Impact Statement; or C. A rationale for program continuation that addresses contributions of the Program to Students, the Community, and/or the Institution.

A. An Improvement Plan to increase program completions should address each of the following applicable issues in the order presented:

1. Brief description of the program, to include enrollment by year classification, faculty supporting the program by type (T/TT, FT, PT, adjunct, other), space/facilities, and administrative support;

2. Projected enrollees and completers for the next five years with justification for such projections.

B. The program is deemed to have a zero fiscal impact it was to be either continued or terminated; and the following issues are addressed:

1. The parent degree program and its actual enrollments and completions for the preceding three academic years;

2. Any curricular elements required for the certificate but not for the degree, and their faculty inputs;

3. Projected program enrollees and completers for the degree program, for the next three years with justification for such projections; and

4. Projected total revenue and total expenditures for the degree program, for the next three years.

C. A description of the contributions of the program to students, the community, and/or the institution should address each of the applicable items in the order presented:

1. The parent degree program and its actual enrollments and completions for the preceding three academic years (this need not be repeated, if the rationale for continuation includes A or B above);

2. Contribution to economic development (and/or workforce) of the state;

3. Uniqueness or relevance of the program to the region or area;

4. Institutional need to maintain this program to support other programs, contributions of program faculty to General Education, or to maintain accreditation. Measures of productivity of program faculty (i.e. number of student credit hours taught by faculty affiliated with the program or academic discipline) can be included;

5. Documented costs of revenue loss anticipated with elimination (e.g., recent major investments, external funding support, tuition, etc.);

6. Placement of graduates (positions held, places of employment, enrollment in graduate or baccalaureate study);

7. Passage rate of completers on licensure/certification exams or measures;

8. Program quality as reflected by regional or national reputation, faculty qualifications, and the documented achievements of program graduates;

9. Measures of program productivity other than numbers of graduates (grants, publications or other); and

10. In the case where program duplication exists (other programs in the statewide inventory within the same CIP code and level), evidence to warrant the continuation of the degree program when similar programs are available within the state. Plans for collaboration or sharing resources with other programs or new delivery mechanisms may be included as applicable.

After the institution presents and submits its report and recommendation, the BOR will either (a) accept the report or (b) request further information from the institution and program.

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