

ADMINISTRATIVE PROCEDURE 4021 – Program Discontinuance

Reference:

Education Code 78016; Title 5, 51022, 55130

In accordance with Title 5, Section 51022, “College districts are required by current regulation and statute to develop a process for program discontinuance and minimum criteria for the discontinuance of occupational programs.” Additionally, Education Code §78016 stipulates that every vocational and occupational program shall meet certain requirements prior to termination.

A program is defined as “an organized sequence of courses leading to a defined objective, a degree, a certificate, a diploma, a license, or transfer to another institution of higher learning” (Title 5, Section 55000).

The Academic Senate for California Community Colleges (ASCCC) has recommended that local senates create a process for program discontinuance (not just limited to occupational programs) that takes into account the following issues:

- negative effects on students,
- college curriculum balance,
- educational and budget planning,
- regional economic and training issues, and
- collective bargaining issues.

Program Discontinuance

- A. The review and decision regarding the viability of a program is a joint venture of the faculty and administration.
- B. Concern about the viability of a program may initially come from the Vice President of Instruction, the area dean, faculty lead, or program coordinator/director. A program may be considered at-risk due to a sustained (three or more years) period of low enrollment; ongoing low retention, persistence, or completion rates; insufficient frequency of course section offerings that result in the inability of students to complete the program in a timely fashion; or a lack of demand in the workforce or unavailability of the transfer major. For all meetings in which program discontinuance decisions or recommendations are made, all full time faculty must be notified and are encouraged to be present and given the opportunity to participate.

Program Review, the Educational & Facilities Master Plan, and other strategic planning activities should be referenced and considered among sources of data and direction in this process, but it is important to emphasize that their primary purpose and use is not to target programs for discontinuance. It is also important to note that program discontinuance should occur only after most serious deliberation, and after all recommended intervention strategies have been implemented but still result in a program that falls outside the college’s mission and master plan, and the department’s goals and objectives. Finally, it is imperative to

state that the purpose of a program discontinuance process is to have criteria in place to guide a discussion should it ever be needed. It should not be construed as an inducement to look for programs to discontinue, or as a threat to avoid honest participation in an academic process such as program review.

- C. Administration may choose not to offer courses in a program for a period of time; this is not program discontinuance. Before implementing a plan which temporarily deletes program courses from the class schedule, administration will consult with faculty in the program.

PROCESS

I. Definitions

For the purposes of this process, the following will be the definition of discipline, program and division:

- A. Discipline:** An individual area of study within a program (i.e. History, English, Math for transfer or associate degree; Fire Technology, Administrative Legal Office Professional, or Food and Nutrition for certificate programs). Each discipline consists of all the courses in the Master Course file that make up the discipline. This is the baseline level of instruction and is linked to a Taxonomy of Programs (TOP) code.
- B. Program:** An organized sequence of courses leading to a defined objective, a degree, a certificate, a diploma, a license, or transfer to another institution of higher education (CCR Title 5 Section 55000). (e.g. completing a program of study leading to a certificate in Welding Technology, or an AA degree in General Business, or leading to transfer)
- C. Division:** A collection of associated disciplines and programs. This is an organizational designation as well as a pedagogical one. (e.g. the Allied Health Division contains the disciplines and programs of Registered Nursing, Diagnostic Radiologic Technology, etc.)

II. Initiating a Discussion on Program Discontinuance

- Program discontinuance discussions can begin in a variety of places, including: College Governance Forums i.e. President's Council, Deans Cabinet; the Office of Instruction, the Office of Student Services, and individual Divisions or Departments.
- The Academic Senate and its committees, including the Curriculum Committee, must have a fundamental and integral role in any discussion of program discontinuance, recognizing the district's policy to rely primarily on the Academic Senate's advice in academic matters.

III. Discussion Criteria

The discussion concerning any specific program considered for discontinuance must necessarily have two components: Qualitative and Quantitative. Both qualitative indicators and quantitative indicators must be discussed in order to have a fair and complete review leading to a decision to either continue or discontinue a program.

A. Qualitative Indicators

Qualitative indicators are based on the mission, values, and goals of the institution, and access and equity for students. These indicators include, but are not limited to:

1. The pedagogy of the discipline.
2. The development of the whole student.
3. The balance of college curriculum.
4. The effect on students of discontinuing the program.
5. The potential for a disproportionate impact on diversity at Merced College.
6. The quality of the program and how it is perceived by students, articulating colleges and/or universities, local business and industry, and the community.
7. The ability of students to complete their degree or certificate or to transfer. This includes maintaining the catalog rights of students.
8. The replication of programs in the surrounding area.

B. Quantitative Indicators

The list of quantitative indicators is long. Any and/or all of these quantitative indicators need to be reviewed to inform the discussion on program discontinuance. They include, but are not limited to:

1. The projected demand for the program in the future.
2. The persistence of students in the program.
3. Weak enrollment trends over a sustained period of time.
4. Insufficient frequency of course section offering
5. Poor term to term persistence (significantly below the college average) of students within the program.
6. Poor retention or success rates (significantly below the college average) of students.
7. Productivity in terms of the FTEs (actual) per FTEF ratio (the version of WSCH/FTE that takes enrollment activity for all attendance types into consideration).
8. Number of graduates from the program (where applicable).
9. Diversity issues: For example, has the ethnic distribution of department enrollees become more reflective of the overall student body over time?
10. When the discipline is being considered for termination: The decline in importance of service to those in related programs must be considered.

C. Student Learning Outcomes

1. How will institutional student learning outcomes be affected by the discontinuance of this program?
2. Which institutional student learning outcomes will be affected by the discontinuance of this program?

D. Discussion Guidelines

1. Discussion of program discontinuance must include all parties potentially affected by the decision. These include faculty, staff, administrators, students, the employing business and industry, and the community. Extraordinary efforts must be employed, if necessary, to ensure that the student and community voice is heard.
2. Discussion of program discontinuance will be conducted in public, open meetings. The dates, times and locations of these meetings will be published using all reasonable means of college communications including print, email and voicemail.
3. Discussions will be conducted using the best practices for meeting facilitation, including agreed upon ground rules, identification of the research group, and recording and publishing outcomes of discussions.
4. Discussions will include both qualitative and quantitative indicators. Sources of data for all indicators will be referenced and cited.
5. A written record of all discussions will be kept in a central location for review by the public. The Division office for the program is recommended.
6. Deliberations and conclusions shall rely primarily on the advice of the Academic Senate per district policy.

Research may include information from the Office of Institutional Research & Development; faculty, staff, and students of the program; Program Plan and Program Review documents; the Advisory Committee; the Articulation Officer; Office of Economic and Resource Development; employers in the workforce; and deans and department heads from other affected programs.

IV. Possible Outcomes of Program Discontinuance Discussion

There are three potential outcomes of the Program Discontinuance process. A program may be recommended to continue, to continue with qualification, or to discontinue.

If it is determined, based on the documented evidence, to recommend continuation of the program, intervention strategies to support the program are to be listed in the research document. Such strategies may include specific outreach projects to recruit new students, the development of articulation agreements, modification of scheduling, curriculum development, faculty retraining, and/or investment in updated equipment.

If it is determined, based on the documented evidence, to recommend continuation of the program in a modified form, the modification, including a list of courses required for completion of the program, are to be listed in the research document. The modifications may include the introduction of a Certificate of Completion or may entail a substantial change to the program. If a substantial change is recommended, the program change must be approved through the curriculum process.

If it is recommended that the program be eliminated, a plan to address the needs of affected students, faculty, staff and operations will need to be designed and a timeline for the elimination process developed.

Students already enrolled in the program must be given the time to complete the program or assistance in transferring to a college which offers a similar program. Students should also be encouraged to utilize career and/or academic counseling. It is the responsibility of the college to protect the investment students have already made in their education.

A process to facilitate the retraining of faculty which includes timelines and college support must be developed in conjunction with the local bargaining unit.

Staff must be given assistance to transfer to another area of the college. A plan must be developed to inactivate courses, reestablish the program (if appropriate in the future) and address other operational issues.

The final written document will include the research, and recommendation for support, modification, or discontinuance plan which will then be forwarded to the Academic Senate where a final recommendation will be made to the Superintendent/President for action by the Board of Trustees, and communicated to the research group.

V. Review of Procedure

This administrative procedure will be reviewed every two years.

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