

4.1 Academic and Student Affairs. Academic Program Discontinuance Process

INTRODUCTION

The Academic and Student Affairs Committee (“ASAC”), a committee of the Board of Directors (“Board) of Valparaiso University (“University”), is charged with the responsibility of reviewing and recommending to the Board the discontinuation of any academic programs that have a substantial impact on either the mission or financial condition of the University. This Guideline sets forth the ASAC’s approved process by which the University reviews a program, recommends its discontinuation to the ASAC for approving or disapproving the recommendation and, if approved, forwarding it to the Board for a final determination.

I. ORIGIN OF PROPOSAL

A proposal to discontinue an academic program may originate at the level of faculty, program, department, dean, or provost, and will involve input at all levels. Normally such a proposal will be the result of a systematic and uniformly applied process of program review.

II. DEFINITION OF “PROGRAM”

“Program” is understood in many ways. Even “Academic Program” is routinely applied to any of the following different categories of organization:

- Academic department or college (discrete fiscal and planning unit with its own faculty)
- Disciplinary field (may or may not coincide with academic department)
- Degree tracks within disciplines/departments/colleges
- Majors and sub-tracks (concentrations, emphases, options) within degree tracks
- Interdisciplinary, multi-disciplinary groupings without discrete fiscal and staffing unit status
- Non-curricular operations in support of teaching and learning (e.g., Teaching Resource Center, Writing Center, etc.)
- Curricular activities related to departmental or other academic units which are referred to as programs (such as internships, practica) but not degree-granting units in themselves

For the purpose of this policy, “academic program” is defined as a discrete curricular unit.

The discontinuance process can be initiated at any point during the year, with special consideration to work and timetables over the summer.

III. CRITERIA FOR UNDERGRADUATE PROGRAM DISCONTINUANCE

Undergraduate programs being considered for discontinuance should be identified and evaluated using the criteria listed below.

In particular, the dean of the appropriate college may initiate a proposal for discontinuance if a program or department receives an unsatisfactory program review, loses accreditation, or fails a standard certification procedure.

- A. Contribution to the University's mission.
 - 1. extent to which the program contributes to preparing students to lead and serve in both church and society
 - 2. extent to which the program contributes to making the University a community of learning dedicated to excellence
 - 3. role of the program in the University's general education plan
 - 4. support the program provides to other programs / departments
 - 5. extent to which the program is of special service to constituencies beyond the University
 - 6. extent to which the program participates in research and teaching collaborations with other programs / departments
- B. Quality
 - 1. results of program review and assessments for the past five years
 - 2. qualitative and quantitative results from external reviews / accreditation for the past five years
 - 3. ability of the program to attract and retain well-qualified faculty (faculty turnover data for the past five years)
 - 4. percentage of program faculty with terminal degrees
 - 5. quality of the program's faculty as demonstrated by participation in appropriate scholarly, creative, and/or professional activities (including, but not limited to, peer-reviewed publications, conference presentations, editorial boards for peer-reviewed publications, and manuscripts / articles reviewed for major publishers and journals)
 - 6. grants and other external support awarded to the program's faculty
- C. Enrollment
 - 1. total student enrollment in program (yearly for last five years)
 - 2. placement of program graduates in post-graduate professional schooling, program-related employment, and graduate schooling
 - 3. average class size, if applicable (yearly for last five years)
 - 4. faculty/student ratio for the program (yearly for last five years)

5. number of graduates from the program (yearly for last five years)
 6. GPA of graduates, both overall and GPA in the program (yearly for the last five years)
 7. percentage of students enrolled in the program at VU and at peer institutions for last five years (number of undergraduates or graduate students enrolled in the program divided by total number of undergraduate or graduate students)
- D. Cost
1. total program cost, as determined by the Finance Office
 2. net revenue generated by the program, if any

IV. CRITERIA FOR GRADUATE PROGRAM DISCONTINUANCE

Graduate programs being considered for discontinuance should be identified and evaluated using the criteria listed below.

In particular, the dean of the Graduate School may initiate a proposal for discontinuance if a program receives an unsatisfactory program review, loses accreditation, or fails a standard certification procedure.

- A. Contribution to the University's mission.
1. extent to which the program contributes to preparing students to make a difference in their professions and communities
 2. extent to which the program contributes to making the University a community of learning dedicated to excellence
 3. support the program provides to other programs / departments
 4. extent to which the program is of special service to constituencies beyond the University
 5. extent to which the program supports diversity, internationalization, and interdisciplinary initiatives
 6. extent to which the program attracts new audiences, based on content and delivery mode
- B. Quality
1. results of program review and assessments for the past three years
 2. qualitative and quantitative results from external reviews / accreditation for the past three years, including specialty accreditation
 3. ability of the program to attract and retain well-qualified faculty (faculty turnover data for the past three years)
 4. extent to which the program meets a market/employment need

- C. Enrollment
 - 1. total student applications to the program (three year trend)
 - 2. total student enrollment in program (three year trend)
 - 3. overall retention rate
 - 4. number of graduates from the program (three year trend)
- D. Cost
 - 1. total program cost, as determined by the Finance Office
 - 2. net revenue generated by the program, if any

V. FORMAT OF PROPOSAL

The written proposal to discontinue an academic program will consist, at a minimum, of the following elements:

- 1. Executive Summary. Summarize the proposal in no more than 500 words.
- 2. Rationale for Discontinuing the Program. Present the reasons for eliminating the program by referring to the evaluation criteria listed in Parts III and IV. What are the strengths and weaknesses of the program at present? Why should the program be eliminated rather than modified?
- 3. Impact on Stakeholders. Discuss the probable impact of eliminating the program on current faculty, staff, students, and other stakeholders.
- 4. Financial Analysis. Present an analysis of the financial impact of eliminating the program.

VI. REVIEW PROCESS

Review of the discontinuance proposal will follow the following format:

- 1. The proposal will be submitted to the appropriate dean(s), who will share the proposal with the faculty member responsible for leading the program being considered for discontinuance. (If the proposal originated at the program/department level, the dean(s) will prepare a summary report and recommendation and send it, together with the proposal, to the provost as in VI.3 below, and the process will continue at that point.)
- 2. The faculty member responsible for the program will have 60 calendar days from receipt of the proposal to prepare a response. The response will be sent to the relevant dean(s) and will include 1) the departmental/program position on the discontinuance proposal and 2) all relevant supporting information, which may include the following:

- a) History of the program
 - b) Demand for the program
 - c) Institutional mission/fit of the program
 - d) Quality of the program
 - e) Relevant assessment data
 - f) Impact and essentiality of the program
 - g) Potential impact of discontinuance of the program
 - h) Financial data
3. Within 14 calendar days of receipt of the response from the program leader, the relevant dean(s) will prepare a summary report and recommendation and send it, together with the proposal and the affected program's response, to the provost.
 4. The provost will consult with the dean(s) with respect to the proposal, response, and summary report. If the provost then chooses not to recommend discontinuance, the process closes at this point. If the provost chooses to recommend discontinuance of the program, he/she presents the case and provides all documents and supporting materials mentioned above to the Educational Policy Committee (EPC) or Graduate Educational Policy Committee (GEPC).
 5. The EPC or GEPC will discuss the provost's recommendation of discontinuance at its first regular meeting following receipt of the provost's proposal. At this meeting the EPC will vote to recommend or not recommend discontinuance of an undergraduate program. Their recommendation, together with all documents and supporting materials, will be forwarded to the Faculty Senate for consideration.
 6. The Faculty Senate will consider proposals to discontinue undergraduate programs, together with all documents and supporting materials. Its vote to recommend or not to recommend discontinuance will be reported to the president.
 7. At its second regular meeting following the receipt of the provost's proposal, the GEPC will vote to recommend or not recommend discontinuance of any graduate program being considered. The results of this vote will be reported to the president.
 8. The president will report his/her decision to continue or discontinue a program to the ASAC. The ASAC will seek the approval of the Board if the Board's bylaws, policies, or practices require such approval. The president will direct the registrar and provost to take any actions necessary to implement this decision once the final decision is made to discontinue a program.

VII. IMPLEMENTATION OF DECISION

If a decision is made to discontinue an academic program, then a protocol for phasing out the program must be developed.

1. An action plan for phasing out the program will be designed by the faculty responsible for the program in consultation with the appropriate dean(s). The plan will include a timeline of steps and actions, including sites of responsibility.
2. The dean(s) will review the final draft of the process and recommend action to the provost. The provost, in turn, may authorize appropriate action or request changes in the protocol.
3. Current students will receive personal letters containing instructions on how to respond to the situation and have their questions answered.

VIII. SAFEGUARDS FOR FACULTY

Background

According to the Valparaiso University Faculty Handbook 2008 Section 2.3.10.1 Causes for Termination of Faculty Members, “demonstrable financial exigencies of the University” and “elimination and reduction of a program or department” are among the list of causes for which a faculty member may be terminated involuntarily.

Process

After the president has approved the discontinuance of a program, the president shall provide timely notice to those faculty members whose appointments are to be terminated. Notice must be given at least 12 months before the date of termination. Due to commitments to students enrolled in a program at the time a decision is made to discontinue the program, termination notices to faculty may be issued at different times following the report of discontinuance to the Board of Directors. Unless there is a compelling academic reason to do otherwise, appointments of tenured faculty in a discontinued program should not be considered for termination until appointments of non-tenured faculty have been considered for termination.

Appeal

An individual receiving such a notice can request a hearing by the Academic Freedom and Tenure Hearing Committee. The appeal may be based only on the grounds that procedures specified in the *Faculty Handbook* have not been followed or that the decision to recommend termination was based significantly on considerations which violate either academic freedom or governing policies on equal employment opportunity. The appeal process will follow the procedures described beginning in Section 2.3.10.2.1.

Placement

Before the administration issues notice to a faculty member of its intention to terminate an appointment because of formal discontinuance of a program, the provost, dean, and affected department chair(s) will make reasonable effort to place the faculty member concerned in another suitable position. If placement in another position would be facilitated by a reasonable period of training, financial and other support for such training will be proffered, although new positions cannot be guaranteed where no need exists. No faculty member in another program will be terminated to provide a vacancy for a displaced faculty member.

Severance

If no position is available within the institution, with or without retraining, the faculty member's appointment then may be terminated. The faculty member will be provided severance salary consistent with the terms of the *Faculty Handbook*.

Reinstatement

If a program that had been discontinued is restored within three years of its discontinuance, new positions shall not be filled through normal search procedures until tenured faculty dismissed due to a program discontinuance and who are qualified for the position have been offered reappointment on terms at least comparable to terms which applied to positions previously held. Such removed faculty members shall be given a reasonable amount of time to accept or decline the offer of reinstatement.