

The University of Tennessee Knoxville Procedural Framework for Academic Program Discontinuance and Reorganization

Purpose and Application

This document was developed to systematically guide the process of academic program review at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville campus in situations where programs are considered for discontinuance or reorganization. It is an outgrowth of administrative and faculty deliberations in the aftermath of proposed budget cuts that were made near the close of the 2008 academic year. At the time that those proposals were made, there were no commonly agreed upon principles to guide the decision-making process.

The Program Review, Reallocation, and Reduction Task Force (hereafter referred to as the Task Force) was established by the Provost in fall 2008. The formal charge to the Task Force was:

To advise and consult with central administration on methods for considering terminations of academic programs in the context of budget reduction.

The Task Force focused on developing criteria for the review of programs for discontinuance or reorganization and creating a mechanism for faculty voice on administrative recommendations for program closure. Membership of the Task Force included representatives from the administration (the Provost and Dean of the Graduate School) and the faculty (the President and President-Elect of the Faculty Senate, representatives from the Graduate Council and Undergraduate Council, and a small number of other faculty members).

As the Task Force was pursuing its charge, the system-level administration was developing a *Procedural Framework for Academic Program Discontinuance* to provide a consistent policy for all campuses. The Task Force chose to place its findings into a modified variant of the system-level *Procedural Framework* so there would be greater coherence between system and campus policies and criteria. Several points warrant attention. First, a Procedure for Review of Administrative Proposals to Terminate Programs is included below, as approved by the Faculty Senate. Second, the Task Force adapted and expanded the system criteria for academic program review (see section A). Third, the definition of an “academic program” has been narrowed from the system interpretation to “a degree granting major, minor or concentration.”

Guiding Principles

Academic program review is an essential component of effective functioning of the University. Decisions about program discontinuance or reorganization should be made only after careful review of the mission and effectiveness of the program as compared with the needs and goals of the campus/institute, the University, and the State. These difficult decisions require a frank examination of relevant information and appropriate consultation with faculty.

Shared Governance in Program Reorganizations

Faculty input is essential not only when programs are closed, but also in the development of proposals for program reorganization. Mergers, consolidations and other forms of program reorganization should always be carried out in accord with principles of shared governance. Deans, directors and department heads should actively solicit and consider the concerns of affected faculty while developing reorganization proposals, and should give these faculty adequate notice, information and time to enable them to evaluate those proposals and make their concerns known.

Procedure for Review of Administrative Proposals to Terminate Programs

Authority to approve termination of programs is given by the board of Trustees to the Faculty Senate through its Graduate and Undergraduate councils.

The purpose of the procedure outlined in this section is to provide expedited faculty input when the administration proposes program closures, as, for example, in response to budget cuts. Under more ordinary circumstances, the standard curricular process for program termination will be employed.

If the administration proposes to terminate a program, the [Graduate/ Undergraduate] council at large may hear the proposal without a termination recommendation from that program, provided that (1) there was adequate faculty involvement in developing the proposal and (2) representatives of the Provost's office and the relevant Dean's office appear before the Council to make the case. After hearing the proposal and gathering any other evidence it deems relevant, the Council may adopt a resolution regarding the proposal, which will then become part of the Council's minutes. The minutes are subsequently forwarded to the Faculty Senate. If the Senate approves the resolution or some modification of it, then that resolution becomes the faculty's recommendation to the administration regarding the proposed program termination.

Procedural Framework for Discontinuance

- I. The Provost is responsible for overseeing academic program discontinuance procedures. When discontinuance of a program is proposed, the Provost shall collect appropriate documentation related to the proposal. The Provost shall consult with the Chancellor/Vice President before initiating program discontinuance procedures. The Provost shall also consult with the Faculty Senate President and one other faculty representative designated by the Faculty Senate. The Provost shall continue to consult with the Faculty Senate President and the designated faculty representative throughout the review process.
- A. The proposal and related documentation should address the following factors, at a minimum, or explain why a factor is not applicable:
1. Overview of the program including any corresponding degree, the mission and stated objectives of the program, and information regarding the faculty assigned to the program¹;
 2. Contribution to the core mission of the campus and University as a whole, general educational value, and curricular requirements of other programs;
 3. Contribution to accreditation;
 4. Relevance to retention, progression, and graduation of students;
 5. Impact of research, scholarship, and creative activity by program faculty;
 6. Demand within the state, nationwide and internationally for graduates of the program, and evidence of success in preparing graduates for employment, including but not limited to record of placement;
 7. Impact of program on external community in the region or across the state;
 8. National or international reputation of the program, including but not limited to external evaluation from professional and academic review boards;
 9. Program uniqueness or possible duplication or competition with other educational programs within the UT system, the Board of Regents system, or other higher education systems;
 10. Costs (financial and otherwise) associated with the program as well as projected financial savings and timetable for realization of any projected savings;
 11. Impact of program discontinuance on currently enrolled students;
 12. Impact of program discontinuance on faculty and staff;
 13. Feasibility of various opportunities to minimize impact of program discontinuance on the external community, currently enrolled students, faculty, and staff;

¹ The report from any recent academic program review, accreditation documents, or other source of existing data should be included.

Final Draft

14. Results of a due diligence review to determine if discontinuance of the program will impact any contractual or other third-party commitments concerning the program. In conducting this review, the Provost shall consult with all appropriate campus/institute and system offices (e.g., business offices, research offices, Treasurer's Office, General Counsel's Office);

15. Enhancement or advancement of diversity.

The proposal and related documentation shall be presented at each step of the faculty consultation process described below and shall be supplemented with any new information added at any step.

- B. After consulting with the Chancellor, the Provost shall meet with the appropriate Dean and the program faculty to discuss the proposal for program discontinuance. Program faculty should provide (either before or after this meeting) further information supporting either continuation of the program or discontinuance of the program. For example, the faculty might provide details about the program's contribution to the campus mission or suggest reorganization or other ways to maintain the program.
- C. If either the Provost or the Dean then recommends further consideration of program discontinuance, the program faculty shall be given an opportunity to object in writing to the proposed discontinuance. The Provost shall then convene and consult with an appropriate committee of faculty from the affected college.
- D. If either the Provost or the Dean then recommends further consideration of the proposal for program discontinuance, the Provost shall consult with, as appropriate, the Graduate Council and Undergraduate Council of the Faculty Senate as outlined in the Procedure for Review of Administrative Proposals to Terminate Programs.
- E. If either the Provost or the Dean then recommends further consideration of the proposal for program discontinuance, the Provost shall make arrangements for a period of public notice preceding a public forum – electronic or otherwise – through which community constituents can present relevant information, raise questions, or express concerns about discontinuance of the program.
- F. After completing the consultation outlined above, the Provost shall make a written report to the Chancellor summarizing the input of the program faculty, the appropriate college committee, the appropriate Faculty Senate committee, the Dean, and the community. Attaching all documentation gathered in this process, the Provost shall recommend to the Chancellor whether to forward the proposal for program discontinuance to the President.

- G. After reviewing the Provost's recommendation and the related documentation, the Chancellor shall decide whether to submit the proposal for program discontinuance to the President. If so, the Chancellor shall submit the proposal and the supporting documentation to the President through the Vice President for Academic Affairs.
- II. The Vice President for Academic Affairs shall review the proposal for program discontinuance and then provide it to the Vice President and General Counsel for review. The Vice President for Academic Affairs shall then forward the proposal to the President, together with his/her own recommendation and any recommendation of the Vice President and General Counsel.
- III. After consulting with the Vice President for Academic Affairs and the Vice President and General Counsel, the President shall decide whether to submit the proposal for program discontinuance to the Board of Trustees. If so, the President shall submit the proposal and related documentation to the Board through the Academic Affairs and Student Success Committee.
- IV. If the Board of Trustees approves the program discontinuance, and if the program discontinuance may result in termination of tenured faculty, the Provost shall consult with the Vice President for Academic Affairs and the Vice President and General Counsel to ensure compliance with all notice requirements and other requirements of Board policy and the Faculty Handbook, including the following specific requirements of Board policy:
1. “[C]ampus administration shall attempt to place each displaced tenured faculty member in another suitable position. This does not require that a faculty member be placed in a position for which he or she is not qualified, that a new position be created where no need exists, or that a faculty member (tenured or non-tenured) in another department be terminated in order to provide a vacancy for a displaced tenured faculty member.”²
 2. “The position of any tenured faculty member displaced because of . . . academic program discontinuance shall not be filled within three years, unless the displaced faculty member has been offered reinstatement and a reasonable time in which to accept or decline the offer.”³

² Board of Trustees Policy Governing Academic Freedom, Responsibility and Tenure H(1) at pp. 11-12.

³ *Ibid.*