

The University of Tennessee

Procedural Framework for Academic Program Discontinuance

Purpose and Application

This procedural framework sets out the minimum procedures to be followed by any campus or institute proposing discontinuance of an academic program. For this purpose, a program includes any academic unit or discipline identified by the National Center for Education Statistics Classification of Instructional Programs (CIP codes) and any unit with a unique and identifiable function within such an academic unit or discipline. The latter includes units with such unique specializations that the faculty would not normally cross from that unit to another within the larger academic unit or discipline. A program is not limited to degree-granting programs and may include non-instructional units such as laboratories and research programs. **In any case an academic program or function must serve as an entity for which there may be an expectation for an evaluation of the entity's function and performance as a whole, separate and distinct from the annual evaluation(s) of the member(s) of the entity.**

Guiding Principles

Academic program discontinuance is a natural and essential component of effective functioning of the University. Decisions about program discontinuance 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.

The Bylaws of the Board of Trustees require that the Board approve the termination of academic programs upon the recommendation of the Academic Affairs and Student Success Committee.¹

When program discontinuance may impact tenured faculty, Board policy specifically requires that "termination of tenured faculty may take place only after consultation with the faculty through appropriate committees of the department, the college, and the Faculty Senate."²

The Board will consider a proposal for discontinuance of an academic program only after the campus/institute has followed Board-approved campus/institute procedures and has provided the Board with appropriate documentation described in this procedural framework.

Campus/Institute Procedures

Each campus/institute must develop its own procedures for accomplishing the required consultation with faculty when discontinuance of an academic program may result in termination of tenured faculty. Campus/institute procedures must be consistent with the procedural framework outlined below and must be approved by the Board.³

¹ University of Tennessee Board of Trustees Bylaws, Article III, Section 7(a)(6).

² Board of Trustees Policy Governing Academic Freedom, Responsibility and Tenure, Section H(1)(b) at p. 11.

³ Campus/institute procedures must be submitted to the Vice President for Academic Affairs for review and approval before being presented to the Board through the Academic Affairs and Student Success Committee.

Timeframe

Recommendations to discontinue academic programs typically will be considered by the Board of Trustees at the Annual Meeting in June of each year. The procedures outlined in this framework for incorporation in campus/institute procedures should be implemented in a deliberate but timely manner facilitating presentation of proposals at the Annual Meeting. As a general rule, the procedures should be completed within four months.

Procedural Framework

- I. The campus/institute Chief Academic Officer is responsible for overseeing academic program discontinuance procedures. When discontinuance of a program is proposed, the Chief Academic Officer shall collect appropriate documentation related to the proposal. The Chief Academic Officer shall consult with the Chancellor/Vice President before initiating program discontinuance procedures. The Chief Academic Officer shall also consult with the Faculty Senate President, one other faculty representative designated by the Faculty Senate, and a student representative. The Chief Academic Officer shall continue to consult with the Faculty Senate President, the designated faculty representative, and the student representative throughout the faculty consultation 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 program⁴;
 2. Contribution to the core mission of the campus and University as a whole and general educational value;
 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 and nationwide for graduates of the program and evidence of success in preparing graduates for employment;
 7. Impact of program on external community in the area or across the state;
 8. National or international reputation of the program;
 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;

⁴ The report from any recent academic program review, accreditation documents, or other source of existing data should be included.

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10. Costs (financial and otherwise) associated with the program as compared to these factors 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; and
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 Chief Academic Officer shall consult with all appropriate campus/institute and system offices (e.g., business offices, research offices, Treasurer's Office, General Counsel's Office).

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/Vice President, the Chief Academic Officer 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 Chief Academic Officer 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 Chief Academic Officer shall then convene and consult with an appropriate committee of faculty from the affected college.
- D. If either the Chief Academic Officer or the Dean then recommends further consideration of the proposal for program discontinuance, the Chief Academic Officer shall consult with an appropriate committee of the Faculty Senate.
- E. If either the Chief Academic Officer or the Dean then recommends further consideration of the proposal for program discontinuance, the Chief Academic Officer 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.

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- F. After completing the consultation outlined above, the Chief Academic Officer shall make a written report to the Chancellor/Vice President 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 Chief Academic Officer shall recommend to the Chancellor/Vice President whether to forward the proposal for program discontinuance to the President.
- G. After reviewing the Chief Academic Officer's recommendation and the related documentation, the Chancellor/Vice President shall decide whether to submit the proposal for program discontinuance to the President. If so, the Chancellor/Vice President 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 campus Chief Academic Officer 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."⁵
 2. "The position of any tenured faculty member displaced because of . . . academic program discontinuance shall not be filled within three years, unless

⁵ Board of Trustees Policy Governing Academic Freedom, Responsibility and Tenure H(1) at pp. 11-12.

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the displaced faculty member has been offered reinstatement and a reasonable time in which to accept or decline the offer.”⁶

⁶ Id.